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# THE WOMAN BEHIND GANDHI

*by*

J. S. BRIGHT, M.A., (Hons.)



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“My wife I made the orbit of all women. In her I studied all women. I came in contact with many European women in South Africa, and I knew practically every Indian Woman there. I worked with them. I tried to show them they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, not only in the political field, but in the domestic as well. But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands. The remedy is in the hands of women themselves.”—*Mahatma Gandhi*.

TO  
MAHADEV DESAI  
THE MAN BEHIND GANDHI

a moral and adorn a tale." *The Woman Behind Gandhiji* by J. S. Bright, is a creditable production written in a racy and gripping style. It is a noble tribute to a noble daughter of the Bharat Mata. From its perusal every Indian will derive considerable pleasure and profit, instruction as well as inspiration.

(PROF.) ABDUL MAJID KHAN

Dated 9th May, 1944.

## CONTENTS

	Page
MISS INDIA            ....            ....	1
THE AFRICAN STAR            ....            ....	13
THE LADY OF LONDON            ....            ...	31
THE VALIANT WOMAN            ....            ...	41
THE DYING EMBERS            ....            ....	53
MOTHER INDIA            ....            ....	69
KASTURBA THROUGH INDIAN EYES            ....	102
KASTURBA THROUGH FOREIGN EYES            ....	111
LEST WE FORGET            ....            ....	120
GANDHI FACES THE FAIR SEX            ....	131



own virtue by the sheer force of their purity." Neither Miss America nor Miss Europe has ever come up to the moral level of Miss India.

Cheiro in his *World Predictions* has made a curious prophecy about Miss India. Strange on the surface, his suggestion is not so strange at the bottom. Cheiro is of the opinion that India will be liberated by the ladies as America was liberated by the lads. India women, he thinks, are modest, but when they are moved, they are mighty and terrible. "A woman moved," said Shakespeare, "is like a fountain troubled." An Indian woman moved, according to Cheiro, is like the heavens upset. Miss India will disorder the British authority so nicely that it will be difficult to weave order out of it. Rather the British will shout, "Let what is broken so remain," and depart to their Lotus Island across the bluish, silver, serpentine Channel. How far Cheiro is true on India, I do not know; but Cheiro has always been right, I know. Howsoever it be, Miss India is out to play a lion's role in the cause of freedom. Miss India is coming to her own, and the British know it. The British know it, because Miss India is coming to her own. John Bull is aware of his tottering position on the mushroom hill of far-flung imperialism. And Miss India knows it

too, because she is the pride of Mother India.

One such strong stout-hearted daughter of India was born of a Porbandhar Merchant in 1869. She was Kastury. *Kasturi* means the scent of a deer, the costliest smell known to the world. We might recall that, when Akbar the Great was born in the deserts of Rajkot, his father Babar, the Lion-hearted, distributed *kastur* among his faithful band of followers. Akbar rose to be the greatest nationalist ruler of India. Now, not far from the birthplace of Akbar, was born a girl of the sweet-scented name, equally destined to play a mighty role in the patriotic theatre of our country. In fact, Miss India was born, because Kastury was Miss India to the backbone. She was set apart by the Hand of Time to become the captain of the glorious band of feminine freedom-fighters.

Coming Kasturba cast her shadows before. She was a firm fighter in a just bickering in the family affairs. This was a silver lining in her cloudy childhood, because in the English sense of the word this firm-footed woman had no childhood. At the break of dawn she found herself at the threshold of life. The western world would be shocked to hear that Miss India was married at the age of thirteen. But this was nothing new. Miss India has always been married at the age of thirteen.

She was married to a young Gandhi who was also of the same age. Not only that. Six Misses India and Masters India were shuffled together like a pack of cards, and then paired off. Mr. D. F. Karaka—"the inglorious Milton" (with affectionate regards) —philosophizes on this early marriage with the proverbial tap full turned on—a *Social Welfare* phrase—and thereby saves me the time and trouble of philosophizing myself :—

"Early at the age of thirteen he was married to a girl chosen and approved of by his parents. Marriage, then, was a sort of slaughter of innocents. His brother, his cousin and Gandhi himself were sacrificed at the altar of Hymen on the same fatetful day — six young children paired off in twos for the sake of convenience and on grounds of economy — children who were about the same age as the young Gandhi. It was the right thing to do in the India of that day. I do not think these children were aware which of them had been cast in the lot as companions for life. They were married with the benediction of a religion that knew no divorce and in which Fate worked in queer ways its wonders to perform. But the die was cast and Gandhi says of his marriage : 'Two innocent children were unwittingly hurling themselves into the ocean of life.'

"I do not question the right of Hinduism to inflict itself on the young and the innocent. You cannot question a Hindu custom any more than you can say 'why' to an English proverb. It is the perpetuation of

that bond of marriage between two people, who had never given their consent to that bond, and if they had, were not in a position to do so, that is an indictment of the religion, which allows such bonds to be created. Marriage then becomes nothing more than 'the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage procession, rich dinners, and a strange girl to play with.' It becomes a form of sexless, compassionate marriage with this difference that, when the period of probation is over, you still have to stick to your bride.

"That is, I am afraid, the plight of many a Hindu husband, who has grown up to realize that he has been bound for life to a woman, not of his choice, and that there are now only two alternatives offered to him where passion or carnal desire remains unsatisfied. It is either repression and self-control, or the gloomy prospect of a local brothel. I say this of early Hindu marriage in general, with no reference to that of Gandhi. However, Gandhi's friend of his younger days, the same that made him sin by tasting forbidden meat, succeeded in leading him to the doors of the house with the red lamp. Gandhi entered, 'I went into the jaws of sin, but God in His infinite mercy protected me against myself.' The consciousness of right followed the moment of lapse soon enough to make him leave that 'den of iniquity.'

"I do not claim it a great virtue that a man who later was to become the undoubted leader of a whole people, should have turned his back on an Arabian brothel with its crude wooden staircase leading to a still cruder little room, where on wooden benches a little whore offered her naked body for a paltry

sum of a few rupees. No great virtue at all that he withdrew from 'the jaws of sin.' It is rather the general attitude of the man towards this problem of sex, his ultimate conquest of the flesh and the vow of celibacy, which he later took, that is part of the philosophy of Gandhi. Then one begins to understand the importance he has attached in his story to this brothel incident, which many others would have preferred to omit."

Young Gandhi was Master India as Young Kasturi was Miss India. They had a need for early marriage, because it meant an early preparation for the struggle ahead. But the young couple had no such idea at the moment. "I do not think," says Gandhi Ji, "it meant to me anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum-beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with.....Little did I dream then that one day I should severely criticize my father for having married me as a child. Everything on that day seemed to me right and proper and pleasing. There was also my own eagerness to get married." So it was a marriage by consent rather than by coercion. The consent of the children was no doubt bought and bribed for in the shape of cakes and clothes. The evils of early marriage, however, are effectively counterbalanced by social

considerations. "Hindu society," says Gandhi Ji, "has another custom which to a certain extent diminishes the evils of child marriage. Parents do not allow young couples to stay together for long. The child-wife spends more than half her time at her father's place. Such was the case with us. That is to say, during the first five years of our married life (from the age of 13 to 18), we could not have lived together longer than an aggregate period of three years. We would hardly have spent six months together, when there would be a call to my wife from her parents. Such calls were very unwelcome in those days, but they saved us both. At the age of 18, I went to England, and this meant a long and healthy spell of separation. Even after my return from England, we hardly stayed together longer than six months."

Gandhi Ji wanted to make his wife an ideal wife. His ambition was to make her live a pure life, learn what he had learnt, and identify her life and thought with his. By nature she was simple, independent, persevering, and with Gandhi Ji, at least reticent.

About his intense attachment to his wife, Gandhiji writes —

"Lifelong faithfulness to the wife, inculcated as the duty of the husband, remained perma-

Naidu's poem called *Dirge*. Kasturba was left behind with a baby in her arms, and the love of an Indian woman for her husband is nothing short of devotion.

The chief possession of Kasturba has always been her moral standard. "The real ornament of woman", says Gandhi Ji, "is her character, her purity. Metal and stones can never be real ornaments. The names of women like Sita and Damayanti have become sacred to us for their unsullied virtue, nor for their jewellery, if they wore any." Gandhi Ji once remarked of Kasturba, "she is a brave girl," and described her as "simple, independent, persevering and loyal." No wonder, Kasturba typified the eternal spirit of Sita and Damayanti. No wonder, Kasturba was Miss India !

## THE AFRICAN STAR

THE Indian Star was destined to shine in Africa. It was from the dark continent that Kasturba first threw her rays across the Indian Ocean. But the life of Kasturba, without touching upon the career of her husband, would be dim and hazy. So let us follow the glow-worm trail of Young Gandhi in the dim light of new era breaking upon the horizons of Mother India.

Made in England, Gandhi Ji returned to his country. He was called to the Bar and wanted to set up a practice, but he found the profession veritably a bed of thorns. "It was easy to be called," says Gandhi Ji, "but it was difficult to practise at the bar. I had read the laws, but not learnt how to practise law. I had read with interest, 'Legal Maxims', but did not know how to apply them in my profession. Besides, I had learnt nothing at all of Indian law. I had not the slightest idea of Hindu and Mohammedan law. I had not even learnt how to draft a plaint; but felt completely at sea." Not only that. He found the profession, both in Bombay and Rajkot, quite unsympathetic. At last he



found a job in Africa for a year worth "a first class return fare and a sum of £105 all found." He was to be a lawyer to Dada Abdulla & Co. "This was hardly going there as a barrister", says Gandhi Ji. "It was going as a servant of the firm. But I wanted somehow to leave India. There was also the tempting opportunity of seeing a new country, and of having new experience. Also I could send £105 to my brother and help in the expenses of the household. I closed with the offer without any higgling, and got ready to go to South Africa."

Thus Gandhi Ji escaped from home once again, leaving behind Kasturba and his two sons. During the voyage he had to face the severest trial that a husband is even called upon to do so, but he remained true to Kasturba. The matter is of such importance to Gandhi Ji and Kasturba, to husbands and wives, to men and women the world over that it cannot be safely omitted. The story begins that Gandhi Ji scraped up a friendship with the Captain of the ship. "The Captain liked me much," he says, "but the liking took an undesirable turn. He invited an English friend and me to accompany him on an outing, and we all went ashore in his boat. I had not the least notion of what the outing meant. And little did the Captain know what an ignoramus I was in such matters.

We were taken to some negro women's quarters by a tout. We were each shown into a room. I simply stood there dumb with shame. Heaven only knows what the poor woman must have thought of me. When the Captain called me I came out just as I had gone in. He saw my innocence. At first I felt very much ashamed, but as I could not think of the thing except with horror, the sense of shame wore away, and I thanked God that the sight of the woman had not moved me in the least. I was disgusted at my weakness and pitied myself for not having had the courage to refuse to go into the room. This in my life was the third trial of its kind. Many a youth, innocent at first, must have been drawn into sin by a false sense of shame. I could claim no credit for having come out unscathed. I could have credit if I had refused to enter that room. I must entirely thank the All-Merciful for having saved me. The incident increased my faith in God and taught me, to a certain extent, to cast off false shame."

This 'news-reel' was a shadow of the coming events. It showed the metal of which Young Gandhi was made. A fit person to shoulder the burdens of a shipwrecked community in Africa. He went as a lawyer but lived as a lion. He was found of public use to the helpless Indian people and it was impossible

yourself and let me go."

And then she added : " Where am I to go I have neither parents nor any relatives to harbour me," she cried in agonised accents. The Mahatma was ashamed and then realized the enormity of his unjust and unreasonable treatment of her. His whole attitude and his conduct towards her underwent a change after this.

Kasturba was a courageous woman, fighting and serving her husband, all the way. Orthodox yet progressive, independent, yet obedient, she brooked no insults and received all respects. Mahatma Gandhi is all praise for her.

He adds : " We have had numerous bickerings, but the end has always been peace between us. The wife, with her matchless powers of endurance, has always been the victor... We are tried friends now. She has been a faithful nurse throughout my illness, serving without any thought of reward... she herself does not perhaps know whether she has any ideals independently of me. It is likely that many of my doings have not her approval even to-day... But she is blessed with one great quality to a very considerable degree, a quality which most Hindu wives possess in some measure. And it is this : willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously she has considered herself blessed in following in my footsteps, and has never stood in the way of my endeavour to lead a life of restraint... Though, therefore, there is a wide difference between us intellectually,

"I have always had the feelings that ours is a life of contentment, happiness and progress."

After a few years' stay there, Gandhiji returned with his family to Bombay where he again set up practice. But soon a call came from South African Indians, and Gandhiji set out, leaving his family in India, to join him later. During this period he established the model Phoenix Settlement in Natal, where the Gandhis and the Polaks lived together. And when the Natal Satyagraha started, Gandhiji and Kasturba were both imprisoned together with the other inmates of the Settlement.

During the voyage of Mrs. Gandhi and her children to South Africa from India in 1904, one of the children fell and lacerated his wrist. The injured arm became much inflamed and so serious was its condition that the doctor advised amputation, in order to save the arm. Mrs. Gandhi refused to allow, pending arrival in Johannesburg. Then Gandhiji examined the injured wrist and found it in a condition of intense inflammation and turning blue with all possibility of gangrene setting in. He promptly applied fresh clay poultices to the open wound, according to the methods advocated by the principal exponents of nature cure, and eventually he had the satisfaction of seeing the wound heal up and complete power restored to the

injured arm.

In the early days of the political and social activities of Gandhiji, Kasturba did not seem to have taken much interest, but slowly interest was awakened in her. When once Gandhiji was discussing with the women inmates of the Phoenix Settlement regarding their participation in the Satyagraha, Kasturba came out and told her husband: "I am sorry that you are not telling me about this. What defect is there in me which disqualifies me for jail? I also wish to take the path to which you are inviting the others." Gandhiji replied: "You know I am the last person to cause you pain. There is no question of my distrust in you. I would be only too glad if you went to jail but it should not appear at all as if you went at my instance. In matters like this every one should act relying solely upon one's own strength and courage. If I asked you, you might be inclined to go just for the sake of complying with my request. And then if you began to tremble in the law court or were terrified by hardships in jail, I could not find fault with you, but how would it stand with me? How could I then harbour you or look the world in the face? It is fears like these which have prevented me from asking you too to court jail." "You may have nothing to do with me," she said, "If being unable to

stand jail I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships and so can my boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle." Thus she always insisted on sharing equally with Gandhiji his sufferings and privations.

Kasturba had several times in her life narrowly escaped death through serious illness and three incidents are referred to by Gandhiji in his *Experiments with Truth*. He writes :—

During the Satyagraha in South Africa, she had frequent hæmorrhage. She was extremely emaciated, and the doctor had to perform the operation without chloroform. It was successful but she had to suffer much pain. She, however, went through it with wonderful bravery. In a few days, however, I received a letter to the effect that Kasturba was worse, too weak to sit up in bed and had once become unconscious. The doctor knew that he might not, without my consent, give her wines or meat. So he telephoned to me at Johannesburg for permission to give her beef tea. I replied saying I could not grant the permission, but that if she was in a condition to express her wish in the matter, she might be consulted, and she was free to do as she liked. "But," said the doctor, "I refuse to consult the patient's wishes in the matter. You must come yourself. If you do not leave me free to prescribe whatever diet I will not hold myself responsible for your wife's life."

I took the train for Durban the same day, and

met the doctor. "Doctor, tell me what you propose to do now. I would never allow my wife to be given meat or beef, even if the denial meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it," I said. "You are welcome to your philosophy. I tell you that, so long as you keep your wife under my treatment, I must have the option to give her anything I wish. If you don't do like this, I must regretfully ask you to remove her, I can't see her die under my roof," he replied. "Do you mean to say that I should remove her at once?" I asked. "Whenever did I ask you to remove her?" he said. "I only want to be left entirely free. If you do so, my wife and I will do all that is possible for her, and you may go back without the least anxiety on her score. But if you will not understand this simple thing, you will compel me to ask you to remove your wife from my place."

#### REFUSES MEAT DIET

I think one of my sons was with me. He entirely agreed with me, and said his mother should not be given beef tea. I next spoke to Kasturba herself. She was really too weak to be consulted in this matter. But I thought it my painful duty to do so. I told her what had passed between the doctor and myself. She gave a resolute reply. "I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations." I pleaded with her, I told her that she was not bound to follow me. I cited to her instances of Hindu friends and acquaintances who had no-

scruples about taking meat or wine as medicine. But she was adamant. "No," she said. "Pray remove me at once."

I was delighted. Not without some agitation I decided to take her away ..It was drizzling and the station was some distance. We had to take the train to Durban for Phoenix whence our Settlement was reached by a road of two miles and a half. I was undoubtedly taking a very great risk, but I trusted in God and proceeded with my task....Kasturba needed no cheering up. On the contrary, she comforted me, saying, " Nothing will happen to me. Don't worry " In two or three days of our arrival at Phoenix a Swami came to our place. He had heard of the resolute way in which we had rejected the doctor's advice, and he had, 'out of sympathy, come to plead with us. He held forth on the religious harmlessness of taking meat, citing authorities from Manu. . But Kasturba put an end to the dialogue at once. "Swamiji", she said, "whatever you may say, I do not want to recover by means of beef tea. Pray don't worry me any more. You may discuss the thing with my husband and children if you like But my mind is made up."

#### GIVES UP SALT AND PULSES

Gandhiji recounts another incident during a later illness :—

It happened that Kasturba, who had a brief respite after her operation, had again begun getting hæmorrhage, and the malady seemed to be obstinate. Hydropathic treatment by itself did not answer.



She had not much faith in my remedies, though she did not resist them. She certainly did not ask for outside help. So when all my remedies had failed, I entreated her to give up salt and pulses. She would not agree, however much I pleaded with her, supporting myself with authorities. At last she challenged me, saying that even I could not give up these articles if I was advised to do so. I was pained and equally delighted—delighted in that I got an opportunity to shower my love on her. I said to her: "You are mistaken. If I was ailing and the doctor advised me to give up these or any other articles, I should unhesitatingly do so. But there! Without any medical advice, I give up salt and pulses for one year, whether you do so or not."

She was rudely shocked and exclaimed in deep sorrow: "Pray forgive me. Knowing you, I should not have provoked you. I promise to abstain from these things, but for heaven's sake take back your vow. This is too hard on me."

"It is very good for you to forgo these articles. I have not the slightest doubt that you will be all the better without them," I said. "As for me, I cannot retract a vow seriously taken. And it is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for man. You will, therefore, leave me alone. It will be a test for me, and a moral support to you in carrying out your resolve." So she gave me up. "You are too obstinate. You will listen to none," she said, and sought relief in tears.

I would like to count this incident as an instance of Satyagraha and it is one of the sweetest recollections of my life. After this Kasturba began to pick

up quickly—whether as a result of the saltless and pulseless diet or as a result of my strict vigilance in exacting observance of the other rules of life or as an effect of the mental exhilaration produced by the incident, and, if so, to what extent, I cannot say, But she rallied quickly, hæmorrhage completely stopped, and I added somewhat to my reputation as a quack.

Gandhiji took the vow of celibacy in 1906, though he had been practising it since 1902. He decided on this step by himself after mature deliberation. When he finally told her of this step, she raised no objection. On the other hand, she had helped him to observe that vow religiously. She had always considered herself blessed in following Gandhiji's footsteps and had never stood in the way of his not too small unconventional experiments. Gandhiji in his autobiography, reviewing at one time his marital life, pays a just tribute to her and says that it had been a life of contentment, happiness and progress.

She had all through Mahatma's dietetic experiments helped him in all possible ways, when Gandhiji was very weak after an acute attack of dysentery and the doctors advised him to take milk, he refused saying that he was already under a vow not to touch milk. It was then that Kasturba as a loving wife found a way out and explained to Gandhiji that his

vow bound him only against cow's or buffalo's milk, but that he could take goat's milk. Gandhiji was finally persuaded and was saved.

According to Gandhiji, she had always been his trusted friend and nurse. During his several periods of illness she had remained by his bedside and nursed him to health. Even during the recent fast in February, 1943, when her health was none too well, she took turns with the other medical attendants at Gandhiji's bedside.

She stood by his side when insults were hurled against him when he first realised the ethics of non-violence. But she gloried in his glory, occasionally shedding a secret tear, as loyal Hindu wives do.

When Gandhiji took the vow of Brahmacharya in 1906 she agreed to abide by his decision. He wrote : "My wife has become a free woman, free from my authority as her lord and master."

In the early days of Natal Gandhiji received many gifts of jewellery from his grateful countrymen whose cause he was sponsoring. A special necklace was sent to his wife. The Mahatma decided to create a trust of them in favour of the Indian community. But she was adamant to have the necklace for her daughters-

in-law. As the torrent of argument went on she burst out : "Ask you ? I know you by this time. You deprived me of my ornaments, you could not leave me in peace with them. Fancy you offering to get ornaments for the daughters-in-law ! You who are trying to make 'sadhus' of my boys from today ! No, the ornaments will not be returned. And pray what right have you to my necklace ?" Gandhiji did not yield but she fought for what she thought her right.

Like that of her husband, truth was an outstanding trait of Kasturba. However tangled the web, she could be relied upon to unweave it. She did not find it difficult to get along with the stern philosophy of her husband. Her subjective weakness did not blur her vision. By ceaseless effort she acquired a noble detachment from worldly things. Her mind became free, fearless and untainted by wrath. She could see the truth with an undimmed vision. This crowned her creative efforts with success. She was a dynamic woman behind the man of miracles. She was the steel frame of which Gandhiji was the final director. " Gandhiji ", says K. M. Munshi, " did not lay down one policy for leaders and another policy for the masses. He was the first to practise what he preached. If the sense of possession was sin, it was a sin for his wife, Mrs.

Kasturba Gandhi, to keep even a few rupees with her, however innocently. ”\*

Mahatma Gandhi has written fervently of Kasturba time and again, recalling the good and golden days of Africa. “ My wife I made the orbit of all women, ” he says. “ In her I studied all women. I came in contact with many European women in South Africa, and I knew practically every Indian woman there. I worked with them. I tried to show them that they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, not only in the political field but in the domestic as well. But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands. The remedy is in the hands of women themselves. The struggle is difficult for them, and I do not blame them. I blame the men. Men have legislated against them. Man has regarded woman as his tool. She has learned to be his tool and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall, the descent is easy ... .... I have felt that during the years still left to me if I can drive home to women’s minds the truth that they are free, we will have no birth control problem in India. If they will only learn to say ‘ no ’ to their husbands when they approach them carnally, I do not suppose all husbands are brutes, and if women only know how to resist

\* I Follow the Mahatma, page 156.

them, all will be well. I have been able to teach women who have come in contact with me how to resist their husbands. The real problem is that many do not want to resist them ..... No resistance bordering upon bitterness will be necessary in 99 out of 100 cases. If a wife says to her husband, 'No, I do not want it', he will make no trouble. But she has not been taught. Her parents in most cases won't teach it to her. There are some cases, I know, in which parents have appealed to their daughters, husbands not to force motherhood on their daughters. And I have come across amenable husbands, too. I want women to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it."\*

Again, Gandhiji says, " I know from my own experience that as long as I looked upon my wife carnally, we had no real understanding. Our love did not reach a high plane. There was affection between us always, but we came closer and closer the more we or rather I became restrained. There never was want of restraint on the part of my wife. Very often she would show restraint, but she rarely resisted me although she showed disinclination very often. All the time I wanted carnal pleasure I could not

\* *Young India*, June 14, 1927.

serve her. The moment I bade goodbye to a life of carnal pleasure our whole relationship became spiritual. Lust died and love reigned instead.”\*

## THE LADY OF LONDON

EDITORIAL NOTE.—*We have the pleasure to reproduce the entire article by St. Nihal Singh with the courtesy of the "Tribune." We refrain from depicting ourselves the short stay of Kasturba in London, because something stated by St. Nihal Singh cannot be bettered. The front rank journalist with a generation of world-wide travels behind him, is creditor to our respect and reverence.*

Some mysterious manipulation behind my back at the switchboard at which the playful god of chance is ceaselessly at work hidden from mortal eyes, has brought to me the news of the Mata Kasturbai Gandhi's passing away in Poona from the very place in which I first made my obeisance to her. This meeting took place in the capital of the British Empire—Empire for me and for you, the reader, and not the Commonwealth—in the early stages of the World War No. I. Strangely, the hour of the day when the said tidings were microphoned from London must have been much the same that it had been when we first set out eyes upon each other.

At the bidding of an earlier, possibly more pompous but not more dangerous, Hitler, the



menace from the skies had just materialized about that time. Judging from the broadcast in which this piece of news formed a slight item, enemy fliers with their deadly and devastating missiles had, not long before, been casting their ominous shadows upon the streets, houses and pleasaunces of the metropolis.

That afternoon, as recreated now, almost a generation later, by my memory jogged into action by the god of chance, was dark. The sun had kept hidden behind leaden clouds, even at mid-day. The half light that had descended upon Londoners and the strangers within their gates was gone.

It was, moreover, wet and chilly. I, ever impatient at the idea of burdening myself with an umbrella, had sallied out without one — without even a “ mac ” (short for mackintosh, so-called after the original maker of this style of raincoat). My clothes, in consequence, were damp, to put it mildly. My good lady at my side insisted upon calling them wet, annoyed at her man’s folly in stalking out of the house without any provision against inclement weather, so capricious in wintry London.

### **The one bright spot.**

I felt sorry. Not for myself, however, but for the little lady who smiled upon us as we

entered the long first floor chamber of a suburban lodging house, at one end of which she had been sitting on a low footstool. Round her slight figure was wrapped a cotton sari with a narrow, black border, thin as if it had been woven in a Lancashire loom (whether so or not I could not of course, tell for sure).

"What inadequate clothing for this bitter, chill, dank weather," my wife said to me, 'sotto voce'. She need not have been careful. Her English—at any rate the language that passes for such upon the American prairie where she had been "raised"—was not understood even by the natives of the British Isles, much less by sari-ed daughters of India. Nor was my version of it, twisted and tortured by the organs of speech made in the Punjab.

That commiseration was wholly uncalled for—certainly unnecessary. The little lady was the one bright spot in the dark, cold room.

When it had originally left the decorator's hands it must have been a stately hall—one of those drawing rooms that Thackeray loved to depict in his novels. It had two fireplaces, one near the front, almost all glass and the other well towards the rear, also generously glazed. These mantle-pieces must have groaned, in the mid-Victorian days when the house came under occupation, under a weight of miscellaneous

'bric-a-brac'. Heavy window draperies must have imparted a touch of colour to the glazed bays. If I had then chanced to enter the room, I should have been walking over carpets covered with huge bouquets of gay roses, instead of bare boards stained a dingy, dark colour. From the cut-glass chandelier depending from the ceiling would have gleamed light from clusters of candles, or may be from gas jets, just then coming into use in the salons presided over by ladies of quality. My visit was, however, being made in the Georgian era and a single electric bulb cast a narrow nimbus of yellowish light from beneath an enamelled shade, forming a pale imitation of the aureole that once shone round the lamp.

A fire was burning in the fire-place towards the back of the chamber. It was, however, the fire of a Bayswater maid-of-all-work's making, in a chamber in the "rooming" house that the one-time mansion had become. It had been bricked up on either side leaving just a tiny hole in the middle for coals to be laid and lit. Many a renter of the room would have been thankful for the landlady's solicitude for their financial welfare ; for in a lodging house, in those days, a small scuttle of coals cost from a shilling to half a crown.

The lady in the black-bordered sari had turned the fire-place into a hearth. A saucepan stood

upon it. As I sat down I noticed that it was half full of water and that the water was bubbling.

In her hands the little lady held long sticks of macaroni. These she had been breaking into bits when she got up to receive us.

Then we saw that she was without foot-wear of any kind—no boots—no slippers—no stockings.

"Tell Mrs. Gandhi for me," my wife commanded, "that she is taking fearful chances with her life. She is very unfair to herself—to her husband—to the world. This is not summer in South Africa, hot and steamy, from where she has come. This is north of the equator—many degrees north of it. Here it is cold—deathly cold. Why I, born in America amidst January snows, shiver in spite of the woollen clothes and underwear I have on. And my feet get like blocks of ice, though they are covered with thick woollen stockings and boots."

Mata Kasturbai assured us that she did not mind the cold. She had been in London for several weeks and had got quite used to English weather. She was more warmly clad than my wife thought. She had on a woollen jacket. This was before the day when the word "jumper" came into popular use.

Yes. I could see that she did not sit all humped up as if she were suffering from the cold. She did not stretch out her hands or her feet towards the fire to warm them. She in fact, sat to one side of the improvised hearth, away from the direct, puny heat-waves that that tiny fire sent out.

Something within her, I concluded, kept her warm—shed a glow over her face. What was it ?

As a word or two from her and many from me, in the 'lingua indica' that her husband has since named Hindi-Hindustani, piled up, that question was answered to my entire satisfaction. It was devotion to her man. It poured from her heart with every beat to her finger-tips, warmed her whole being, lit up her countenance and set a perennial smile upon her lips.

"He likes—." For her there was only one "he" in all the three worlds. "He likes these," she explained to us. "These" were the macaroni sticks she was breaking into bits when we arrived and kept on breaking till the small bundle of them was finished.

"I shall put these bits into this kettle. The water is boiling. After they are tender I shall add some tomatoes to the macaroni and cook the two together."

Sure enough. There were a few tomatoes ready to be cut up.

"He also likes these," she said. She referred to ground, or, as they are popularly called monkey-nuts. A small mound of the husks she had shelled from the nuts lay upon the dark-stained floor near her bare feet.

He, we learnt, was not very well. He had been down with fever in fact. A call had come for him. A taxi had been sent. He had got out of bed, dressed somehow, gone.

Not one superfluous word did she utter, I noticed, than was needed to impart that information. This, I could see, was not because of inadequacy of language. In that brevity was reflected her temperament. What she felt about her man's utterly disregarding his physical needs because work for the Motherland would not let him stay indoors was a matter too near her heart to be put into phrases. She needed no solace—no strength from the outside. Within herself she had all that was required to sustain her at any and every turn of the wheel of life.

As we were going home in the evening after a lengthy chat with Mohandas Karamchand, Gandhi, even then high-souled but not yet acclaimed as the Mahatma, I said to myself: "How fine that we had that noble lady all to ourselves for a considerable time. Had her hus-

band not been called away we might never have had a glimpse of her inner-self. ”

My wife, I thought, must be saying to herself : “He—he—he” was ever the burden of her remarks. She surprised me by saying :

“ Why, Mrs. Gandhi may have sprung out of the pages of the ‘ Ramayana ’ ! She is the type that one reads of in the ancient lore. I never thought that if I lived to be a hundred years old I should ever come across such an ideal woman in this sophisticated age ”!

Years passed by. One morning we sat in a Canadian hotel opening letters and papers. My wife, an old hand at journalism, was scanning a weekly. She suddenly stopped turning the pages and exclaimed.

“ Why, man alive ! Do you know what Gandhi has told his wife ? She said to him that she found the homespun so thick and bulky that it made her clumsy in doing her cooking and other domestic work and asked him if she might not put on thinner cloth while attending to these duties. Would you believe it that the old man did not sympathise with her ? He, instead, told her that if ‘ khadi ’ made her feel clumsy, she could remove it and go about her work as she had come into the world. She was too old for any one to mind whether she was

naked or clothed. What mattered was that she was true to the ideal. Wicked, I call it. ”

The very next time we set eyes upon Kasturbai she was wearing a ‘khaddar’ sari. It was not fine, soft ‘khadi’ from the top of the Madras Presidency such as my wife had made into the dress she was wearing. No. It was coarse thick, bulky ‘khadi’. It was pure white, too, it had no border, narrow or broad, nor was it printed with a pattern of any description.

Framed in this ‘khaddar’ her face, older and lined was aglow, just as it had been when she was a little younger and was dressed in the thin soft, mull sari, with the narrow black border. The smile that played upon her lips in the glare of the tropic sun was as sweet as it had been in sunless Bayswater, nearly twenty-five years earlier. Here she was the shadow of her great man, now almost universally acclaimed as the Mahatma. Her thoughts centred round him. Her hands ever wrought for his comfort.

I do not recall a single instance when I saw Gandhi Ji, no matter in which hemisphere, when Kasturba was not present or nearby. She however was no mere *chaya*—shadow mate of Surya, the sun-god. Of that I was reminded—almost rudely reminded incident that occurred not so very long ago.

A call had come for Gandhi Ji. The caller



was taking him away. This time it was not in a taxi, but a motor, that he was to board. This motor would soon be passing through the open gateway of a huge structure inside which it is easy to go, but terribly hard to come out once one was within it.

A member of my fraternity asked Gandhi Ji if he had any message for Mata Kasturba.

"Message." Mahatma Ji exclaimed. "What message? She needs no message. She is a brave lady."

Yes—a brave lady—one of the bravest that India ever bore. The Motherland is poorer for her passing away. How infinitely poorer however, must she have been had Kasturba not lived and wrought for her for some seven decades!

## THE VALIANT WOMAN

AT last the African Star dawned on the horizons of India. Kasturba was destined to glorify her home and set an example of selfless service to the millions of her kind in her own country. She was deeply enriched by her experience of foreign countries, particularly Africa. And this experience came in extremely handy. "What those know of England who only England know?" is true. It is even more true of India. In fact, we do not know India unless we know Africa, because it is in Africa that we meet the sternest aspect of slavery. There we find a "colour bar" encircling the entire Indian nation. "Englishman called them coolies," says Gandhi Ji, "and as the majority of Indians belonged to the labouring class, all Indians were called coolies or 'Samis'. 'Sami' is a Tamil suffix occurring after many Tamil names, and it is nothing else than the Sanskrit 'Swami,' meaning a master. Whenever, therefore, an Indian resented being addressed as a *Swami* and had enough wit in him, he would try to return the compliment in this wise: 'You may call me *Sami*, but you forget that *sami* means a master. I am not your master!' Some Englishmen would wince of this while others would get angry, swear at the Indian and

if there was a chance, would even belabour him for 'Sami' to him was nothing better than a term of contempt. To interpret it to mean a master amounted to an insult !"

Mahatma Gandhi was known in Africa as a "coolie barrister." The merchants were known as "Coolie merchants." The original meaning of the word (coolie) was thus forgotten, and it became a common appellation for all Indians. No wonder, such a soil was rich with creative ideas for Mr. Gandhi as well as Mrs. Gandhi, for the heroine as well as the hero

"What have been the most creative experiences in your life ?" asked a youthful inquirer, "As you look back on your past, what, do you think, led you to believe in God when everything seemed to point to the contrary, when life, so to say, sprang from the ground, although it all looked impossible ?"

"Such experiences are a multitude", replied Gandhi Ji. "But as you put the question to me, I recalled particularly one experience that changed the course of my life. That fell to my lot seven days after I had arrived in South Africa. I had gone there on a purely mundane and selfish mission. I was just a boy returned from England wanting to make some money. Suddenly the client who had taken me there asked me to go to Pretoria from Durban. It was not

an easy journey. There was the railway journey as far as Charlestown and the coach to Johannesburg. On the train I had a first class ticket, but not a bed ticket. At Maritzburg where the beddings were issued the guard came and turned me out and asked me to go to the van compartment. I would not go and the train steamed away leaving me shivering in the cold. Now the creative experience comes there. I was afraid for my very life. I entered the dark waiting room. There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him. What was my duty, I asked myself. Should I go back to India, or should I go forward with God as my Helper, and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active non-violence began from that date. And God put me through the test during that very journey. I was severely assaulted by the couchman for my moving from the seat he had given me."

No wonder, the struggle for India began in Africa. Unlike the proverbial traditions, Mahatma Gandhi began his political charity abroad to end it at home, which he has by no means as yet ended. And throughout these toils and turmoils, the lioness-hearted Kasturba stood like a rock behind her faltering husband in the storm-swept political struggle of Africa. She was his only solace in the darkest moments over

the Dark Continent.

Ghandiji returned to India together with his family after the start of the Great War, and when a few years later the Indian struggle for political emancipation was launched Kasturba was again in the thick of it—always at the side of her husband who had long ago become a national hero and was now the unquestioned leader of the whole nation.

Frequent jail-going shattered her health irreparably. Deenabandhu Andrews, who saw her on her first release from jail in Natal, wrote : "These ladies returned from prison with their health in many cases utterly broken down in the hard prison life which they had been obliged to endure. Mrs. Gandhi suffered most of all, and when I saw her for the first time after her release, it seemed to me that she would be unable to get strong again owing to her shattered health.

"She sat by her husband's side, simple and serene and dignified in the hour of triumph as she had proved herself simple, serene and dauntless in the hour of trial and tragedy.

'I have a vision too of her brave, frail, pain-worn hand which must have held aloft the lamp of her country's honour undimmed in one alien land, working at rough garments for wounded soldiers in another.

"The great South African leader, who, to

quote Mr. Gokhale's apt phrase, had moulded heroes out of clay, was reclining, a little ill and weary, on the floor eating his frugal meal of nuts and fruit (which I shared) and his wife was busy and content as though she were a mere modest housewife absorbed in a hundred details of household service, and not the world-famed heroine of a hundred noble sufferings in a nation's cause."

Thus wrote Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, giving her first impression of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi in a letter to Lady Mehta in February, 1915. Later events only underlined this first impression adding little to it.

During the first days of the civil disobedience movement this courageous woman courted arrest with all the zest of the younger ones. Even her old age did not prevent her from jumping into the turmoil of Rajkot.

And at Saigon where Gandhiji had decided to locate his Ashram after his release from jail, hers was the all-pervading spirit. Called "Ba" (mother) she was the 'de facto' builder of the Ashram, though she had been hard put to it on occasions to conform to Mahatma's high standard of judgment.

On one occasion a certain inmate of the Ashram was unwell, but "Ba" had not kept herself informed of it. Mahatma Gandhi took her

to task for that lapse at the prayer-meeting in the presence of everybody saying : "If Deva Das had fallen ill you would have known it long ago ; but how is it that you do not keep yourself informed when others fell ill." She did not fight over the issue this time. She expressed regret and never faltered in duty towards the Ashramites again. With meticulous care she would see that everyone of them was well-fed and well-cared for. With her own hands she would run the kitchen and entertain the guests.

Here is an interesting passage from *Gandhi, and the Indian Problem* by Lt.-Col. E. G. Hart. It is a pleasant picture of life at the Satyagraha Ashram on the Sabarmati river and conveniently near the Sabarmati Central Prison, some four miles from the big city of Ahmedabad. Two Englishwomen, theosophists, came from Madras for a month's instruction in hand-spinning. The extracts were from the diaries of these ladies which were published by Gandhi in *Young India* with the qualification : "The references to the Ashram are not wholly true. All is not so rosy as it has appeared to these friends. The Ashram has its jars, it has its trials and difficulties, it has to wear away many a rough edge. But it does try to live up to its name."

Lt.-Col. Hart condenses a certain amount into his own words, and gives the more picture-

sque passages as originally printed. There were about one hundred and thirty members. They rose before 4 a.m. and had prayers at four, then breakfast. Then work, with perhaps a walk between seven to eight, till ten-thirty, when all adjourned for the midday meal. Work again till six o'clock, which was dinner time. Prayers were at six-thirty. "There are three rectangular spaces of sand surrounded by low walls and on these carpets are spread, upon which we all sit down. The scene is one which never fails to enchant us, the white-robed figures of men and women in attitudes of reverent prayer, the stars overhead, the young boys around the musician who leads the singing and expounds the reading, the twittering of the last late birds in the trees, all go to make a scene of entrancing beauty steeped in devotional atmosphere which makes for peace and happiness.

Of the evening meal it is written: "At six o'clock we had dinner in Mrs. Gandhi's kitchen, she sitting cooking chapatties the while. She had two small charcoal stoves built of fire-brick against the wall and a small movable stove in front of her. She sits upon a board with her store cupboard behind her so that she can reach the things she wants without moving. Her cooking utensils are all of brass, tin lined and beautifully kept. She never rises during the



cooking of a meal, and anything which is not within her reach is brought to her by her granddaughter, the child of her eldest son. When necessary she supplements her fire-places by using a primitive stove." Further it is stated, "We shall never see a more interesting or unique sight whilst we are in India than this charming little lady and first class housekeeper as she sits in her snow-white garments catering to the needs of the inner man." They conclude with the passage : "What has struck us most about the Ashram is the music which accompanies all the activities, the rhythmical sound of the carding bow, the humming of the spinning wheel, the music of the tambure and the sitar in the clap-rooms, wherever we turn there is harmony and joy, discipline and devotion."

Duty and discipline, discipline and devotion has been the chief note of the Gandhi's Ashram. If there was an order, it was an order for everybody without distinction of caste or creed. "Do not judge others," says Gandhi Ji. "Be your own judge and you will be truly happy. If you will try to judge others, you are likely to burn your fingers. If I were secretary of a Congress Committee, I should see that those who do not observe discipline are struck off the Congress register."

Kasturba, like any other camp-follower,

submitted rigidly to her sense of duty and discipline. Duty, the stern daughter of the voice of God, was the stern mother of Kasturba's body and soul. She put herself coolly and consistently to the rod of high and dry conscience.

When on one occasion she forgot to pay in four annas to the Harijan Fund, given to her by somebody as a contribution Gandhi Ji called it an act of theft. She bowed to her husband's judgment and did the necessary penance, without a murmur, without shirking the irksome obligation.

Kasturba had been in the forefront of the freedom struggle of the country ever since the days of the South African Satyagraha. In a message to the country in March, 1922, after the arrest of Gandhi Ji in the Non-co-operation Movement launched then, she said :—

My dear countrymen and countrywomen.

My dear husband has been sentenced today to six years' simple imprisonment. While I cannot deny that this heavy sentence has to some extent told upon me, I have consoled myself with the thought that it is not beyond our powers to reduce that sentence and release him by our own exertions long before his term of imprisonment is over.

I have no doubt that, if India wakes up and seriously undertakes to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress, we shall succeed not only in releasing him, but also in solving to our satisfaction all the three issues for which we have been

fighting and suffering for the last 18 months or more.

The remedy, therefore, lies with us. If we fail, the fault will be ours. I, therefore, appeal to all men and women who feel for me and have regard for my husband to whole-heartedly concentrate on the constructive programme and make it a success.

Among all the items of the programme, he laid the greatest emphasis on the spinning wheel and khaddar. Our success in these will not only solve the economic problem of India in relation to the masses, but also free us from our political bondage. India's first answer, then, to Gandhi Ji's conviction should be that :

(a) All men and women give up their foreign cloth and adopt khaddar and persuade others to do so ;

(b) all women make it a religious duty to spin and produce yarn every day and persuade others to do so; and

(c) all merchants cease trading in foreign piece-goods.

She typified in herself the ancient Hindu ideal of a "Sati". She was a valiant participator in the fights in manifold causes which her great husband espoused. Nor her work by itself was negligible. All those who came in contact with her felt the glow of her loving care. Her kind attention was unforgettable. No wonder, she was called "Ba". Some measure of how much she had endeared herself to her countrymen was to be had in the storm of angry protest which broke out when the bumptious representative of

a British paper put out a yarn some months ago about her having been obliged to walk on foot from Victoria Terminus to Birla House.

The fragile, simple old lady, followed the saint of Saigaon to jail after the August resolution. In her was centered all that India prizes most. Her gifts to the nation had been no less than her husband's. India will not willingly forget her. Her memory will remain untarnished through the ages, watered by the tears of a grateful people.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu calls Gandhi Ji, "a mickey mouse of a man." Kasturba was no mickey mouse of a woman. She was a well-built woman. Her smile lighted up with joy the little world around her husband. Her eyes enveloped him with affectionate understanding. She kept company with the springy feet and was reminded of undying youth. She was a self-forged instrument of something above and beyond her. She was never a sorrowing wife seeking solace in a domestic tangle. She enlivened the dull moments with joyous jokes. In the welter of activities she was the master of the situation. She applied the principles of non-violence to the fluctuating experience of everyday life. She kept up the poise and pose of yogi. She willed her body to perform her appointed task. She shaped the lives of those around her. Her courtesy was in-

comparable. Her talk had a soulful reality. "Yoga is perfection in action," says the Gita. The words came true in herself as well as in her husband.

\* \* \* \*

*"As I listened to the rupturous discourse (of Mahatma Gandhi), which other engagements had to bring to an end, I was reminded of the great words of St. Francis of Assisi: Light looked down and beheld Darkness: 'Thither will I go,' said Light; Peace looked down and beheld War: 'Thither will I go,' said Peace; Love looked down and beheld Hatred: 'Thither will I go,' said Love—and the word was made Flesh and dwelt among us."*

MAHADEV DESAI

## THE DYING EMBERS

THE brilliant flame of Indian womanhood burnt itself to embers on the hearths of Aga Khan's Palace. A jail is a jail even if it may have no iron bars. A prison is a prison even if it be called a palace. When the Congress launched on a do-or-die struggle in August, 1942, Kasturba girded up her loins for action, and found herself safely lodged in the palatial dungeon. The golden bird had its wings clipped. And she was by no means happy in the close-guarded drawing rooms of Aga Khan. The only comfort she had was the presence of her noble husband whose heart she warmed until she burnt herself to blue embers in the ever-hot oven of patriotic fire.

Mahatma Gandhi saw two best of his companions wing away behind the prison bars. First Mahadev Desai. Then Kasturba. In quick succession they left him in the lurch. It was a divine plan. And it *just* happened. Mahadev was light as Kasturba was love. The two flames that brightened the heart of the great Mahatma. Light looked down and beheld darkness : "Thither will I go," said Light. Love looked down and beheld Hatred : "Thither

Gandhi) funeral and after a long-lasting exchange of views between Gandhi Ji, the Government of Bombay and the Government of India, it was decided finally to perform all the funeral rites in the compound of Aga Khan Palace itself, but to allow all friends and relatives to attend personally there. Thus the Aga Khan Palace prison opened at last its doors to about hundred close and intimate friends of Mr. Gandhi !

Thus Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, Mr. N. C. Kelker, Mr. D. V. Gokhale, Mr. Haribhau Phatak and several others could meet Mahatmaji and exchange a few words. The sight was indeed historical. When Mahatma Gandhi saw them coming in, he got up from the bed-side of his beloved wife and Namaskars and embraces followed. The moment was tense. Gandhi Ji said : "What a life that we have to meet under such strange circumstances !" A world of thought is contained in those few words.

Over a hundred persons, relatives and friends of the Gandhi family were present at Kasturba's cremation ceremony. The ceremony took place in the Aga Khan Palace compound near the spot where the late Mahadev Desai was cremated.

Mr. Devdas Gandhi, the youngest son of Mahatma Gandhi, performed the last rites of his mother.

Dressed in a white Khadi " saree " and covered with an orange-coloured Khadi sheet with " kumkum " (vermillion) annointed on her forehead, Kasturba looked as though she

was having a peaceful sleep. Decked with flowers, the bier was carried by her sons and relatives from the palace to the place of cremation a hundred yards away from the buildings.

The Brahmin priest, who officiated at the funeral ceremony of the late Mahadev Desai, officiated at that day's ceremony also. The ceremony, itself was a short and simple one.

Swami Anand, Mr. Kanoo Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's grand nephew, Mr. Shanti Kumar Morarji, Mr. Kamalnaryan Bajaj and other friends, who were present on the occasion, arranged the funeral pyre.

As Kasturba's body was lifted from the bier and placed on the pyre, Mahatma Gandhi, was visibly moved and with his shawl he was seen wiping his eyes. Excepting for this moment of sentiment, Mahatma Gandhi remained cool throughout and showed no signs of emotion or excitement. All the time he was seen talking to the visitors.

After the preliminary rites of cremation had been performed and the body placed on the pyre, Mahatma Gandhi beckoned to the priest to allow him to conduct a brief service. Recitations from the Koran, the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible were made and some of the members of the Ashram sang in chorus a few ' Bhajans '.



Kasturba's ashes was performed in Aga Khan Palace on the morning of February 25, 1944, Gandhiji and his sons Hira Lal, Ramdas, Devadas and the inmates of the Palace were present on the occasion. After the recital of Ashram prayers by the inmates of the Palace necessary religious rites were carried out. Some local friends sent flowers for the last Puja.

"Raksha" (ashes) were taken to Alandi a holy place six miles from Poona and scattered in the river Indrayani. "Asthis" (bones) of Mata Kasturba were taken by Mr. Devdas Gandhi for immersion in the holy water of Ganges.

After immersing the ashes of his mother at Alandi that morning Mr. Devdas Gandhi left for Bombay 'en route' to Allahabad.

At a special invitation from Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya a small quantity of Mrs. Gandhi's remains were taken to Allahabad to be immersed at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna.

Mr. Devdas Gandhi arrived at Allahabad on Feb. 27, (Sunday) from Bombay with the remains of his mother, Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi. The ashes were deposited in the Ganges at the "Tribeni" next early morning, for which Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had made all necessary arrangements.

Among those present at the station to receive Mr. Devdas Gandhi were Dr. K. N. Katju, Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit, Mrs. Purnima Banerji, Mr. Feroz Gandhi, Sardar Narmada Prasad, Mr. B. N. Varma, Radhey Shyam Pathak, Professor K. K. Bhattachari and others.

It is understood that according to Hindu practice a ghee lamp was kept burning at the spot where Mata Kasturba breathed her last and flowers were being duly placed there.

At Allahabad on Feb. 28, Mr. Devdas Gandhi, in a statement to the Press, said :—

“ The numerous messages of fellowship and sympathy that have been addressed to me and to my father direct at his detention camp address call for something more than a public acknowledgment of gratitude. So many of them are elaborately worded and yet do not express all that their authors would wish to say. The outpouring of sorrow are of so heart-rending a character as to make sympathy mutual between them and those of us who are directly bereaved. It would, I think, be improper of me to keep to myself the treasured and sacred memory of my mother's last moments and not share them, in so far as they can be publicly shared, with the vast concourse of my fellow mourners. I am as yet too deeply moved and afflicted, momentarily I am sure, with a strange loss of faith in destiny. Except in so far as that is what it is to have suddenly become motherless, I shall hope to fight my way out of this mental condition.

" She never completely lost consciousness till the last moment. When the Government communique on Sunday pronounced her condition to be grave, she was still hoping against hope to survive the latest phase of her illness. The kidneys had failed to function during the last few days due to the feeble action of the heart and this was complicated by apical pneumonia without fever. The blood pressure had come down to 75-52. The doctors had given up the struggle. When I reached on Monday evening she was in distress which only the devoted nursing of her fellow detainees could superficially relieve. It was against medical expectation that she survived the night. That was the last night of her earthly existence every second of which she received the ministrations of all her companions and Gandhiji. In a semi-conscious state she would answer questions in monosyllables or by gently shaking her head. Once when Gandhiji came near her she raised her hand and asked 'Who is it?' and then seemed greatly comforted when he attended to her for nearly an hour. Besides her he looked several years younger, although his hands shook. The scene reminded me of the incident in South Africa nearly 32 years ago when mother had just emerged a complete physical wreck from a course of three months' imprisonment. A European acquaintance meeting both my parents at a railway station, said: "Mr. Gandhi, is this your mother.?"

" In the morning she looked worse but peaceful. On Monday she had clung to a lingering hope. On Tuesday she seemed to be resigned. The mind was at peace and clearer in spite of the gathering effects of

anæmia. She had refused all medicine and even water since Monday. But she opened her mouth wide for a drop of Ganges water at mid-day on Tuesday. It comforted her for a while. Then at about 3 p.m. she sent for me and told me that she was going. "I must go some day, why not to-day" she pleaded. I, the last child she had given birth to, was evidently holding her. But with this remark and other tender and sweet words, in the presence of all the others, she tore herself away from me. Never did her articulation sound clearer, or her words appear choicer to me. Almost immediately after this, she joined her hands together, sat up unaided and with her head bowed low she prayed for several minutes in the loudest tone she could manage. 'God my refuge, thy mercy I crave.' That is how I would translate into English the winged words which went up from her again and again. When I left the room to dry my tears, Penicillin had just arrived in the verandah of the Aga Khan's Palace. The doctors had little desire to try it. Pneumonia was only a contributory factor. The final failure of the kidneys would not have been relieved by Penicillin. And besides it was too late. Yet, this wonder-drug for pneumonia was being mechanically got ready.

"At about 5 o'clock, I gathered courage to face mother again. Now she smiled. It was the smile which has spoiled me these 43 years. But it was also a dying mother's last pensive smile to cheer her son. My mother was intensely human. On her behalf I crave the forgiveness of all those who have come into close contact with her for the extra share of affection she reserved for me. God surely will condone the

frailties of one who otherwise lent glamour to His creation. This smile, however, revived my interest in Penicillin and I thought it my duty to pursue the matter with the doctors. They were willing to try it, but offered little hope of success. When Gandhi Ji came to know that I had approved the idea of giving painful injections to mother, he sacrificed his evening walk in the garden to reason with me. 'You can't cure your mother, no matter what wonder-drugs you may muster, I will yield to you if you insist. But you are hopelessly wrong. She has refused all medicines and water these two days. She is in God's hands now. You may interfere if you wish to, but I advise against the course you are adopting. And remember you are seeking to cause physical-pain by an injection every four or six hours to a dying mother.'

"It was not for me to argue. The doctors felt most relieved. Just when this sweetest of all wrangles I have ever had with my father was over, word came that mother had called out for him. He immediately took over from those who were giving her restful support. He leaned her against his shoulder and tried to give her what comfort he could. As I stood in front watching along with ten others, I saw that the shadow on mother's face had deepened but she spoke and moved her arms about for fuller comfort.

Then in the twinkling of an eye the collapse came. Tears rolled down from several eyes while Gandhi forced back his. The entire group stood in a semi-circle and chanted the favourite prayer which they had been used to say long in her company. Within

two minutes she was still. As one of the inmates remarked to me, she waited for us to finish our meals. The last meal of the day in the detention camp is taken at about 6 p. m. She died at 7-35 p. m.

I am on my way to Allahabad, as I write these lines, with her remains which will be consigned to the Ganges on Monday. These consist of literal handful of tiny motherly bones. They were collected on Friday by the inmates of the camp with due ritual from the ashes of the pyre. They were then laid out on a banana leaf and after being decorated with flowers and vermilion and incense and after a consecration ceremony they were prepared for the last journey. I am thus travelling in the company of my mother but after to-morrow I know I shall never travel with her again. It was Gandhiji's clear decision that her ceremony of immersion in the confluence of the two great rivers be performed. 'What crores of Hindus do as a sacrament is what will please your mother,' he said to me. The decision was reinforced by a telegram from the revered Pandit Malaviyaji expressing a wish that this should be done.

The bulk of the ashes were, according to custom, consigned in the river Indrayani near Poona. I am not sure of the scientific propriety of this latter course and would have welcomed any other form of disposal. But in the absence of a considered alternative, custom prevailed. For me and the little company which visited the riverside before sunrise on Friday morning, it was a solemn and uplifting ceremony. A small quantity of ashes collected on the second day after the cremation has been preserved in the detention camp and these include the five glass bangles which formed part of the funeral pyre and was subsequently

found intact and unbroken.

" The illness dated from September, 1942, in the detention camp. It was then for the first time that heart symptoms were noticed. She had never had heart attacks before although she had been indifferent health for the past four or five years. But after the initial setback in September, 1942, she never regained normal health. It is no exaggeration to say that both physically and mentally she was not equal to the strain of incarceration. She had been through terms of imprisonment before notably one which included solitary confinement in a village in the interior of Rajkot when she came to the verge of disaster. but this last one was throughout for her the most trying of ordeals in which both the spirit and the body withered. The palatial surroundings and atmosphere were the antithesis of what she was used to. The barbed wire fencing and the sentries completed the picture. I do no injury to the memory of my dear mother when I tell the public that she pined to get back to what she herself described to me last year as the low-roofed cottages of Sevagram. The fact of indefinite detention weighed still more heavily upon her and not all the creature comforts of the realm could give her peace of mind and spirit. The thought of thousands of others, some of them intimately known to her, suffering similar restraint made her misery more acute and one of her silent prayers to which she had dedicated herself during the past year and a half, was that she and Bapu may be kept permanently in detention if only the others could be freed.

Would her release from prison during the last ~~several~~ stages of her illness have helped? It would have

helped, if she had been also offered the option of returning to the detention camp when she desired to do so. That would have constituted a complete formula of "kindness." But the fact remains that she never had the benefit even of the psychological aspect of an offer of release, except the last merciful one from the Maker. I was, therefore, shocked and amazed to find that the Agent of the Government of India in America has made a statement to the effect that the Government of India had wished on several occasions to release her, but that she had refused to avail herself of the offer. This is even contrary to the official announcements made of the point in India and I have seen no explanation so far for the different version put out in America.

"On behalf of my three brothers, other relations and myself, I express our deep sense of obligation to all those who have either taken the trouble to send us messages or have borne the sorrow with us in silence. We have no other brothers or sisters save the millions of kindred spirits who share our bereavement in equal measure. I apologise most humbly to any who may hold the view that by this lengthy public statement I have been guilty of occupying too much time or newspaper space. The occasion is one for tolerance. I cannot help feeling that if I should fail to send out this detailed open letter of grateful acknowledgment, I would merit the just reproach of millions of fellow-mourners.

"I ought to add a word as to how Gandhiji has stood this ordeal. He was looking obviously fagged. He grieves over this tragic gap which has come into his life, for she, in a large measure, is responsible for what he is to-day. But he maintains a philosophic



calm and keep his emotions under the control expected of him. The atmosphere around him was one of sadness without gloom and when my brothers and I parted company with the camp on Friday, he cracked his customary jokes as a substitute for tears. His health, I believe, is good."

The remains of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi were immersed at the confluence of Ganges and the Jumna that morning. Mr. Devdas Gandhi who had brought these ashes from Poona last night stayed for the night at the platform. Early in the morning about 7-30 a.m. the ashes were put on a bier which was profusely garlanded and decorated with tricolour flags and flowers and then taken to the river. On the way the car carrying the bier was stopped at the residence of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who put a wreath on the remains. At the "bandh" a procession was formed which followed the bier to the Sangam.

Mr. Devdas Gandhi, after taking his bath at the confluence, immersed the remains and then recited some 'slokas' from the Gita. Brahmachari Prabhudatta conducted the "Asthi Nikshep" (immersion of the bones) ceremony.

A large number of people had collected to pay their last homage to Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi.

## MOTHER INDIA

QUIET Kasturba is no more ! For quarter of a century she had been the silent suffering-mother of Young India. Mother India was personified in her. No other woman has embellished the pages of Indian history so brilliantly as Kasturba. No other woman has left her foot prints so deep in the sand of India as Kasturba. She possessed the dignity of Razia Begum, the divinity of Mira Bai. No wonder, her loss is mourned by one and all throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan. Not until she had shuffled off her mortal coil that many of us knew how great she was. It was a sudden awakening like that of a baby who rises to find his mother off. All her life, she preferred to play a second fiddle, as mothers are wont to do. She was a woman behind the scenes, the artist behind the camera. She was not one of those persons who make news. It was only when she vanished that we came to estimate the tragedy of our loss. Touching tributes were paid to her from press and pulpit. The following editorial from the "Hindustan Times" dated Thursday, February 24, 1944, is but a common example, a drop in the ocean of

tributes :—

“ The brave spirit of Kasturba Gandhi is no more. It is another piercing blow to the anguished heart of her people separated, by prison bars, from their leaders. It is typical of her life of toil and devotion to her country that she has laid down her life in prison. It is typical also of the Government's policy that, despite appeals from all parts of the world, they insisted on keeping her in detention till the end. All India will join in paying their respectful homage to the memory of Kasturba and her life of saintly service which has served as a model to India's womanhood and an inspiration to countless millions. In her frail figure was centred a heroic spirit which knew no fear and counted no sacrifice too great for the service of her people. Always by the side of her husband to aid him in his great mission, ever ready to march into prison or face any of the risks and privations of the hard political life which is the lot of all subject peoples, and working throughout with a cheerfulness and simplicity which illumined wherever she went, Kasturba had an unforgettable personality. No one owes more to her than Mahatma Gandhi himself whose constant helpmate she was for over forty years. It can be truly said of Kasturba that she found her happiness in his work, his ideals were hers and so complete was the identity between the two that, throughout these troubled years, they worked as one in the country's cause. She gave of her best unquestioningly. It is a grievous loss to Mahatma Gandhi that within less than two years he has had to part with his two devoted comrades who were part and parcel of his

life—first, Mahadev Desai, and now his wife, Kasturba, whom Providence has called away. The prayers of his people will all be with him today in the loneliness of his detention to bear him up in his great sorrow. Over 20 years ago, Kasturba herself gave a message to her countrymen which summed up her own life and work. She said thus :

‘ The remedy, therefore, lies with us. If we fail, the fault will be ours. I, therefore, appeal to all men and women who feel for me and have regard for my husband to whole-heartedly concentrate on the constructive programme and make it a success.’

“ These words come back to us today with renewed force, for, to her, service of the people was a passion which animated her whole being. Undaunted by failure or discouragement, she pursued her allotted task with courage and faith in the ultimate future which knew no defeat. No life which was spent in such selfless service can ever be in vain. To her sorrowing people, the lesson of her life will certainly not be lost.”

“ The death, under tragic circumstances, of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi will add special poignancy to the grief which the event will cause throughout the country. Her frail, modest and unassuming figure gained a significance in our national life which some of her more talented and sophisticated sisters might well envy. Typifying all that was noblest and best in Hindu womanhood, she would have wished for nothing better than to devote her whole life to the service of her great husband, but Gandhiji's greatness thrust on her responsibilities

which she bore bravely to the very last. It is easy to imagine the strain which Gandhiji's several fasts must have caused her but the courage and patience with which she went through them was the admiration of all. His last fast brought him under the very shadow of death but though he survived it, the shock was too much for Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi. Not even her brave spirit could keep her frail frame going and the end has come only all too quickly.

Her death has placed the crown of martyrdom on a life of suffering and sorrow. She who dedicated her life to the service of her husband and the ideals for which he strove all through has been marked out for the supreme honour of laying it down in the great cause. To Gandhiji this ending of a life's comradeship cannot but be a matter of profound sorrow, though he will have the consolation that the whole nation shares his grief with him. But even he would not have wished that she who stood loyally by him all through the trouble and turmoil of his life and shared with him all his trials and tribulations should have had a different end. In the illumined pages of the history of the struggle for freedom of this country, her name will occupy an honoured place and as years pass it is sure to gain more imperishable renown. For the second time in about eighteen months, the gates of the Aga Khan Palace have been flung open to tell the world the story of a second martyrdom. But the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church and we have no doubt that by their death, Mahadev Desai and Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi have

brought the day of the country's freedom nearer."

In the Central Assembly, after questions, Dr. P. N. Banerjee, Leader, Nationalist party, sought the chair's permission to make a statement.

The chair held that no statements could be made. Thereafter, members of the Nationalist party withdrew from the House.

It was learnt in the lobby that Dr Banerjee's statement was intended to refer to Mrs. Gandhi's death. Congress party members were not present when the House met.

Mr Abdul Qayum, acting Leader of the Congress party in the Central Legislative Assembly, and Dr. P. N. Banerjee, Leader of the Nationalist party in the Assembly, issued a statement in the course of which they said : "It was the desire of the Congress party and the Nationalist party that the Legislative Assembly should adjourn for the day out of respect to the memory of Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi after passing a condolence resolution. Dr. Banerjee stood up to make a statement in this connection, but was not allowed. The Congress and Nationalist parties did not participate in the day's proceedings."

New Delhi, Wednesday.—The Council of State adjourned for half-an-hour before taking up the business on the agenda as a mark of re-

respect to the memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi.

Making a reference to the death of Mrs. Gandhi, Pandit Kunzru said : " Since we met last, we have received with profoundest regret the news of the death of Mrs. Gandhi. Though she was unassuming to a degree and kept herself in the background, she was a national figure. By her devotion to her husband and her own self-sacrifice she had won a place in the hearts of millions of her countrymen. I am sure her death is being mourned today by the entire nation. Our hearts go out to Mahatma Gandhi in his sorrow. Mrs. Gandhi by the way in which she worked for the country, did a lasting service to womanhood in India and raised the moral stature of the country. This is the day of her funeral. You will, sir, and I hope the whole House, understand our feelings that we are so overcome with grief as to be unable to take part in the discussion of the Budget today. I hope that in view of the solemnity of the occasion, the House will adjourn as a mark of respect to Mrs. Gandhi's memory. Indeed, it will be fitting if we all send a message of condolence to Mahatma Gandhi in his bereavement and make him feel that all of us, no matter what our opinions may be, feel deeply with him in this hour of distress."

Mr. Hussain Imam associating himself with Pandit Kunzru on behalf of the Muslim League party said : " I hope that irrespective of our parties, all of us will associate ourselves in expressing our sympathy in this hour of trial for a man whose eminence is second to none in India and it will be fitting that we adjourn the House."

Sir Mohammad Usman, Leader of the House, agreed to the suggestion that the House should be adjourned for half-an hour, but as regards sending a telegram, he could not agree to it as there would be many cases of similar nature and it would not be possible to send telegrams in all such cases.

On February 25, 1944, Mrs. Subharoyan referred to the passing away of Mrs. Gandhi in the Central Assembly :—" Our hearts are full of deep sympathy for her husband. It may be that that sad event may not mean much to the members of the Government : It may only mean one person less to bother about, but it means a great deal to us and it was for that reason that I abstained from speaking yesterday. I think no language would be strong enough to express the pain and sorrow of our hearts and the resentment we feel at the Government's attitude."

On February 25, 1944, as a mark of re-



spect to the memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi, the Bengal Legislative Council (Upper House) adjourned its meeting for half an hour. The President declared that, as desired by the House, their sympathy and condolence would be conveyed to Mahatma Gandhi.

The Bombay Municipal Corporation passed a resolution on February, 25, 1944, condoling the death of Mrs. Kasturbai Gandhi who, the resolution stated, "was held in high esteem by millions of people in India and whose noble sacrifice and devotion to duty, both personal and public, are an inspiring example to the country's womanhood."

The Mayor, Mr. M. K. Masani, was requested to forward a copy of the resolution to Mahatma Gandhi and to his family with an expression of the Corporation's sympathy in their bereavement.

The Corporation then adjourned as a mark of respect to the late Mrs. Gandhi.

At a public meeting held at Patna a resolution expressing great sorrow at the sad and untimely demise of Mrs. Gandhi was passed. Mr. Baldeva Sahay, ex-Advocate-General, presided.

Many hundreds of telegrams have been received by Mahatma Gandhi condoling the

death of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi from all classes of people.

Messages have been received from His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal, the Metropolitan of India, Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasan, Nawab Sir Murid Hossain Qureshi, Mr. Abdul Hamid Khan, Mr. R. D. Tatta, Mrs. Neli Sen Gupta, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Mr. Shaukat Ansari, Prof. Humayun Kabir, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Iyer, and on behalf of numerous public bodies in India, Ceylon and South Africa. More messages continue to be received.

At a mammoth public meeting held a resolution was passed expressing profound grief at the sad demise of Mata Kasturba. Mr. Abdul Qayum Ansari, Momin leader, Hawaldar Ansari, General Secretary of the Bihar Momin Volunteers' Association and various other Momin leaders spoke on the occasion.

The meeting also demanded the release of Congress leaders forthwith and the immediate formation of a National Government at the Centre.

The shops in the city remained closed.

Many towns observed *hartal*.

*Hartal* was observed in Delhi and New Delhi. Shops and textile mills also closed. The students had abstained themselves from

was received in Hyderabad (Deccan) with sorrow. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was overwhelmed with grief when the news was conveyed to her and decline to comment.

Dr. Syed Abdul Latif said : " India has lost an inspiring example of true womanhood."

The Hyderabad stock exchange and business houses and shops in various localities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad were closed as a mark of respect to Mrs. Gandhi.

The Cenrtal .Committee of the Communist Party of India in the course of a statement said : " The Committee shares in the grief of Mahatma Gandhi and assures him that the entire country regards the loss as a national loss."

A procession, which was taken out on Wednesday evening at Surat, was dispersed by the police who took into custody ten persons, including six girls, for interrogation. The arrested persons were later let off. All educational institutions in the city remained closed. Many shops in the city also observed " hartal."

Millworkers in the labour area at Cawnpore at a meeting under the auspices of the Cawnpore Mazdoor Sabha passed a resolution expressing deep sorrow at Mrs Kasturba Gandhi's demise.

Several industrial organisations and commercial firms in Calcutta remained closed as a mark of respect to the memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi. Many business establishments in Indian quarters observed "hartal" and the educational institutions were mostly closed after midday recess.

The numerous telegrams of condolence sent to Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Devadas Gandhi by various organisations and individuals in the city include those from the Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Marwari Chamber of Commerce, the Calcutta Yarn Merchants' Association and the editors of the "Amrita Bazar Patrika," "Hindustan Standard" and "Ananda Bazar Patrik."

Mr. S. A. Brelvi, editor of the "Bombay Chronicle" and President, All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, presided over a condolence meeting held on Thursday morning at the Marwari Chhatra Niwas to express condolence at the death of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi.

Later Mr. Brelvi met a number of prominent Calcutta journalists when questions relating to the press in India were informally discussed.

Mr. Brelvi left for Bombay in the afternoon.

It is understood that the permission sought by some prominent citizens to hold a meeting to condole the death of Mata Kasturba Gandhi had been refused by the District Magistrate, Poona.

A public meeting scheduled to be held in Karachi on Thursday evening under the chairmanship of Lala Shamboonath, Mayor, to condole the death of Mata Kasturba Gandhi had been cancelled by the conveners. The District Magistrate, whose permission was sought, it is reported, asked the guarantee that no reference would be made at the proposed meeting to political prisoners and detenus. Hence the above decision was taken by the organisers.

The offices and schools of the Karachi Municipal Corporation remained closed owing to Mata Kasturba Gandhi's death.

The Progressive Party in the Council of State, of which Pandit H. N. Kunzru is the leader, sent the following telegram to Mahatma Gandhi through the Home Department of the Government of Bombay : "The Progressive Party in the Council of State has learnt with great sorrow of the death of Mrs. Gandhi and offer its deepest sympathy to Mahatma Gandhi, in his bereavement. She typified in herself the highest ideals of Indian womanhood and by her devoted services to the country endeared herself

to her countrymen."

The Hindustani Mercantile Association, Delhi, passed a condolence resolution on the death of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi.

A similar resolution was passed by the Arya Mahila Sangh.

"The demise of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi is a great national loss to India," said Pandit Misra, Minister of Orissa, interviewed by the Associated Press.

Rajkot, the native place of Mahatma Gandhi, observed hartal on hearing the news of the death of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi. All important commercial concerns suspended business. A public meeting as well as mass prayer for peace to the departed soul were held.

Most of the mills and markets in Ahmedabad remained closed on Thursday for the second day as a mark of respect to the memory of the late Mrs. Gandhi.

On hearing the news of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi's death the Sangli market observed hartal on Wednesday, almost all shops remaining closed. A condolence resolution was adopted at a meeting in Willingdon College. The Sangli Chamber of Commerce also passed a condolence resolution.

The Benares Hindu University, municipal schools and almost all the city shops were closed

to-day (Wednesday) as a mark of respect to the late Mrs. Gandhi.

Commenting on the death of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi, Maharajkumar Sir Vijaya said that her passing away has robbed Indians of their mother and he hoped that the Mahatma would be given strength to stand the big loss.

Lucknow observed partial "hartal" to-day to mourn the death of Mrs. Kasturbai Gandhi. Some of the educational institutions, including Lucknow University and the offices of the Municipal and District Boards, were closed as mark of respect to the memory of Mrs. Gandhi.

A public meeting of the citizens of Ahamedabad was held on Wednesday evening in Manek Chowk, when a resolution of condolence at the death of Mrs. Gandhi was passed.

Shops in almost all bazaars in Nagpur were closed as a mark of respect in memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi.

A meeting of the citizens of Allahabad was held on Wednesday evening under the presidency of Pandit Sundar Lal to mourn the death of Mrs. Gandhi. A resolution expressing heartfelt sorrow at the passing away of Mrs. Kasturba, and assuring Mahatma Gandhi that the great example which her life and death in prison had set before the nation shall not go in vain, was passed.

The Sind Legislative Assembly, which met to receive the budget, passed at the outset a resolution recording deep sorrow at the death of Mrs. Gandhi and conveying the heartfelt condolence to Mahatma Gandhi and the family.

Mr. Nichaldas Wazirani, leader of the Opposition, said that Kasturba was a faithful and dutiful wife, a good mother and a good citizen. She was, if not the greatest among Indian women, at any rate one of the greatest women India had produced.

The Premier, Sir Ghulam Hussain, Hidayatullah whole-heartedly associated himself and his colleagues with the resolution. He was followed by Mr. Fraser (European member) and the Speaker.

The House passed the resolution all standing and adjourned for 15 minutes.

As a mark of respect to Mata Kasturba, most of the shops, including those of Muslims, remained closed yesterday. It is learnt Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Padamja Naidu, her daughter, have sent condolence messages to Mr. Devdas Gandhi.

Mir Akbar Ali Khan, a prominent local Muslim leader, Dr. Malkote, Begum Soghra Humayun and Pandit Ramkhari have expressed their grief and sorrow in press statements.

Five persons were arrested in the Fort area



on Wednesday morning. It is alleged they were trying to persuade shopkeepers to close down their shops.

In connection with the death of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi the City Magistrate, Meerut, has promulgated an order under Section 144, Cr.P.C. for one week from to-day in the city and cantonment areas prohibiting processions of any kind, demonstration of any sort, assemblage and going together of five or more persons in any public place, carrying of lathis, swords or any kind of weapons, etc., except mourning meetings, public or private, for which previous permission from the District Magistrate is essential.

A joint meeting of the Congress and National parties in the Central Assembly placed on record their deep grief at the passing away of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi and authorised Mr. Abdul Qayum and Dr. Bannerjee to communicate to Mahatma Gandhi their heartfelt sympathies in his bereavement.

Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi's sad demise cast gloom over the city of Ahmedabad particularly among the inmates of the Harijan Ashram, where Mrs. Kasturba had stayed for a long period. All principal markets in the city and textile mills were closed and the city observed a general hartal.

A resolution of condolence at the demise of

Mrs. Gandhi was passed by the Cawnpore Municipal Committee at a special meeting this afternoon which thereafter adjourned postponing consideration of the annual budget estimates. The Hindu Sangh has sent a telegram to Mahatma Gandhi conveying condolence. Almost all educational institutions and principal markets were closed.

Delhi received with great shock the news of the death of Mata Kasturba Gandhi. With the exception of a few shops, all markets are closed including a number of Muslim shops. All educational institutions except one or two where also partial attendance was registered remained closed. The Delhi Communist party held an emergency meeting this morning when a resolution expressing deep sorrow at the death of Kasturba and offering respectful condolence to Gandhiji and the bereaved family was adopted. Mr Shyamnath, Secretary, Congress group in the Delhi Municipality, sent a telegram to Mahatma Gandhi through the Bombay Government expressing condolence. A notice of condolence resolution was given for municipal meeting to be held this evening.

As a mark of respect to the memory of late Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi, Hindu business quarters at Jullundur remained closed to-day. The local colleges remained closed and staff and students

passed a resolution condoling her death.

It is understood Raja Sir Maharaj Singh, President, Indian National Liberal Federation, has sent a telegram to the Home Secretary to the Bombay Government, requesting him to convey his heartfelt sympathy to Mahatma Gandhi on the death of Mrs. Kasturbai Gandhi.

The sad news of the death in detention of Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi—who was affectionately called Ba—was received in Lahore with feelings of profoundest sorrow.

The Indian-owned dailies both,—English and Urdu,—including the Muslim dailies—carried the news on their front pages.

The tragic event is talk of the town today (Wednesday). Most of the local colleges and schools, including many girls colleges, were either closed or students did not attend the classes as a mark of respect to the memory of Mrs. Gandhi. Almost all the business centres of the city were closed and shutters were drawn in almost all the big bazaars in the city. Shops were also closed in suburbs of Lahore.

The cessation of the business in the commercial circles and the closing down of the educational institutions was all spontaneous.

The tri-colours on the Lakshmi Insurance buildings and the Sikh National College were

flown half mast.

In the schools and colleges which were closed, condolence meetings were held where in many cases Principals of the institutions presided and resolutions, mourning the sad death of Mrs. Gandhi, were passed.

The short and touching references made at the meetings held in the colleges referred to Mrs. Gandhi's life of devotion and service to her country and to Mahatma Gandhi. References were also made to the circumstances under which she passed the last days of her life.

The resolution adopted at the meeting of the staff and students of the Forman Christian College (an American institution), while placing on record their deep sense of sorrow at the passing away of Mata Kasturba said : "Our grief is all the more poignant because she expired as a detenu. We offer our sincerest sympathy to Gandhiji and other members of the family, whose sorrow is shared by the whole nation."

Similar resolutions were passed at the meetings held in the D. A. V. College, the S. D. College and the women colleges.

The meeting of the executive committee of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, which was held to-day, was adjourned, without transact-

ing any business, after passing a condolence resolution.

At another meeting held at the Y.M.C A. Hall, under the auspices of the newly constituted National Liberal Federation, Punjab, a resolution, moved from the chair, mourning the death of Mrs. Gandhi, was adopted, all standing.

The meeting had been organised by the Federation for a lecture by Principal C. L. Anand on "Legal status of the Council of Ministers vis-a-vis the Governor" and Sir Gokal Chand Narang presided at the meeting.

A meeting under the joint auspices of the S. D. College Students Fellowship and the S. D. College Speakers' Union, with Prof. Wadhawa Ram in the chair, was held in the evening where a resolution was passed, mourning the death of the "greatest Indian woman of the age."

The declamation contest, which was to have been held in the college, was postponed.

Mr. Jagdish Lal Sharma has sent a telegraphic message of condolence, on behalf of the Punjab Students, to Mahatma Gandhi, describing the death of Mrs. Gandhi as a national tragedy.

Some of the commercial concerns also remained closed. Telegraphic messages of condolences have been sent to Mr. Deva Das Gandhi by a large number of people from Lahore.

Jammu City observed full day hartal as a

mark of respect to Mrs. Kasturba's sad demise.

The city of Gujranwala observed spontaneous hartal this morning. At a public meeting, Mr. Jagan Nath Monga presiding, representatives of various parties spoke paying tributes to the departed soul.

Simla observed a partial hartal to-day on the passing away of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi in Poona.

Grain markets and main business quarters remained closed to-day as a mark of respect to the memory of Mata Kasturba Gandhi. Some educational institutions and Lyallpur Cotton Mills also closed in this connection.

Hartal was observed by Red Shirt and Hindu shopkeepers at Peshawar.

At a largely attended public meeting, which passed a resolution of condolence, tributes were paid to Mrs. Gandhi, among others, by Dr. Khan Sahib, Diwan Bhanju Ram Gandhi and Khan Aligul Khan.

To mourn death of Mata Kasturaba Gandhi all principal places of business, at Amritsar such as three cloth markets, Katra Ahluwalian, Bazar Kaishdhara, Lala Gopal Chand Cloth Market, Karmon Deorhi, Guru Bazar, Gold and Silver business, Majith Mandi, Satta Chamber, Hindu shops in Hall Bazar, etc., remained closed.

The students of the textile class of Government Industrial School and several other associa-

tions passed resolutions of condolence. Telegrams of condolence have also been sent to Mahatma Gandhi.

The Executive Committee of the Punjab Christian Labour League held under the presidency of Mr. Masih Parshad passed a condolence resolution on the death of Mrs. Gandhi.

At a special meeting of the members of the Executive Committee of the K. E. Medical College Students' Union the following condolence resolution was passed :—

“We, the members of the Executive Committee of the Students' Union of the K. E. Medical College, Lahore, express our great sorrow at the untimely death of Mrs. Gandhi and pray to God that her soul may rest in peace and that peace may also come to the bereaved family.”

A meeting of the nationalist Muslims of Bombay was held to mourn the death of Kasturba Gandhi. Mr. Salehbhoy Abdul Kader presided.

After recitations from the Holy Quran by Maulana Mahmud Saheb, Mr. Latif Jafry moved the following resolution :

“This meeting of the nationalist Muslims of Bombay records their sense of deepest grief and sorrow at the sad demise of Kasturba Gandhi, who was in detention at Poona along with

Gandhiji. The meeting is conscious of what a blow her demise means to Gandhiji, to her children and the nation. This meeting conveys its deepest sympathies to Gandhiji, and the bereaved family. In her death the nation has lost a brave fighter for its cause. Gandhiji, an ideal companion, and the Indian womanhood a noble example of self-sacrifice and devotion. May her soul rest in peace !"

At a meeting of Nationalist Muslims of Bombay, Mr. Salehbhoy Abdul Kader presiding, a condolence resolution was passed on the death of Mrs. Gandhi. The resolution stated that in her death "the nation has lost a brave fighter for its cause, Gandhiji an ideal companion, and Indian womanhood noble example of self-sacrifice and devotion."

A condolence meeting of the citizens of Benares, held in the Town Hall under the presidentship of Mr. Sri Prakasa, recorded its deep sense of sorrow at the death of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi and offered its respectful condolences to Mahatma Gandhi and the bereaved family.

Dowager Maharani Lalita Kumari Devi of Vizianagram presided over a ladies' meeting held last evening to mourn the passing away of Mrs. Gandhi.

The Ceylon National Congress sent the following telegram to Mahatma Gandhi : "Cey-



lon mourns the death of the noble daughter of India and sends sincere condolences."

A resolution expressing condolence with the members of Mahatma Gandhi's family in their bereavement was passed at a meeting held to mourn the death of Mrs. Gandhi last evening at Vivekananda Society Hall, Colombo, under the joint auspices of Gandhi Kalagam and Gujrat Hindu Association. Speakers at the meeting who included Mr. M. S. Aney, Government of India's representative in Ceylon, paid tribute to the memory of late Mrs. Gandhi.

Mr. Peri Sundaram, who presided, referred to Mrs. Gandhi as a great and illustrious soul.

Mr. Aney said that the death of Mrs. Gandhi was a major calamity for modern India. She was the personification of the ideals of Indian womanhood and was typically an Indian lady.

The Reception Committee of the Andhra Provincial Journalists' Conference met and passed a condolence resolution on Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi's demise. Mr. S. V. Subba Rao, the President of the Conference, presided.

Desabhakta Konda Venkarappayya in the course of a statement says : "The death of Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi has overwhelmed the country with grief. She had with more than manly courage, gone through all the trying events of her life occasioned by the strenuous

endeavours of Mahatmaji to reach the level of human perfection. She had also her full share, along with him, in all the sufferings which the great national struggle has involved."

Mr. V. L. Muniswamy Pillai, M.L.A., ex-Minister, in a statement says : In expressing my sincere condolence to Mahatma Gandhi and the members of his family at the death of Shrimati Kasturba, I must say that the womanhood of India has lost an illustrious daughter who was an ideal wife and kept up to the high traditions of Hindu household and dharma. Though the demise has brought unbearable sorrow to Mahatmaji the whole nation, irrespective of caste, feels the great loss of one who practically helped him in his noble mission of the uplift of the depressed.

The Municipal Councils at the following places adjourned their meetings and passed condolence resolutions on the death of Kasturba Gandhi : Bezwada, Anantapur, Cocanada and Tiruvannamalai.

Statements paying tributes to the memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi have been received from the following, among others : Mr. L. S. Raju, M.L.C., President, Civil Liberties Union, Bangalore ; Raja Peddasubbaramudu Setty, President, Arya Vysyamaha Sabha, Nandyal ; Mr. A. R. Gopalaswami Aiyar, President, Panchayat

Board, Ayyampet.

Reports have been received of hartals, condolence meetings, processions and prayers from the following places in the mofussil: Hospet, Bellary, Bangalore, Proddatur. Tirupathi, Vaniyambadi, Salem, Madura, Kaveripakkam, Tiruvannamalai (Municipal Council), Mangalore, Tinnevely, Virudhunagar, Sattu. Aoyampet, Tuticorin, Tellicherry, Mayavaram, Ranipet, Kumbakonam, Chidambaram, Annamalaiagar, Calicut, Trichinopoly, Vellore, Surat, Cocanada, Alleppey, Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Tirthahalli, Bodinaickanur, Bapatla, Markapur, Arcot, District Board, Mandya, Arya Vysia Samajam. Coimbatore, and Agricultural College Students' Club, Negapatam (Municipal Council), Tenkasi, Vizianagaram, Trichinopoly (District Board meeting and National College Union), Mysore (City Municipal Council), Nagercoil, Timmancheria, Tiruttani, Rajahmundry, Warangal, Gudivada, Sulurpeta, Bapatla, Calicut (Women's meeting), Quilon, Shiyali, Mattancherry Vaniambady, Madura (Rashtrabhasha Parisha), Rayavaram (Varthagat Sangham), Ammapet (Tagore Kshagam), Anantapur (Ceded Districts College Literary Union), Chirala (Journalists' Association), and Trivandrum.

Mr. T. G. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar has given notice of his intention to move a condo-

lence resolution touching the death of Mrs. Gandhi, as an urgent motion, at Tuesday's meeting of the City Council.

Condolence resolutions were passed by the following organisations in the city : Meeting of male Nurses of the Stanley Hospital, Arya Samaj (Central).

A meeting of the nationalist Muslims of Bombay was held this evening to mourn the death of Kasturba Gandhi. Mr. Salehbhoj Abdul Kader presided. After recitation from the Holy Quran by Maulana Mahammad Saheb, Mr. Latif Geoffrey moved the following resolution :—

"This meeting of the nationalist Muslims of Bombay records their sense of deepest grief and sorrow at the sad demise of Kasturba Gandhi, who was in detention at Poona along with Gandhiji. This meeting is conscious of what a blow her demise means to Gandhiji, to her children and the nation. This meeting conveys its deepest sympathies to Gandhiji and the bereaved family. In her death the nation has lost a brave fighter to its cause, Gandhiji an ideal companion, and the Indian womanhood a noble example of self-sacrifice and devotion. May her soul rest in peace !"

The Kasturba Gandhi Day was observed in Calcutta on Sunday in different places in the city. The women's meeting, held in the Indian Association Hall, expressed sorrow at the death

of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi, and paid tributes to her memory. The students held a meeting in the Mohabodhi Society Hall and adopted a similar resolution in pursuance of the decision of the Bengal Provincial Students' Federation. The Mayor presided over a public meeting in Burma Bazar.

"Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi was the embodiment of all that is fine, noble and pure in womanhood. She raised the stature not only of Indian womanhood, but of world womanhood," said Mrs. Subrayan, M.L.A. (Central), paying tributes to the memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi at a public meeting held at Delhi on Sunday evening in accordance with the instructions of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.

The meeting appointed a committee to collect funds for raising a suitable memorial to the memory of Mata Kasturba Gandhi.

Glowing tributes to the memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi were paid and the rôle she played during her lifetime in Gandhiji's life was stressed by various speakers at a representative public meeting held at Lucknow on Sunday evening, Lady Wazir Hasan presided.

Tributes were paid to the memory of the late Mrs. Gandhi at a public meeting held on Sunday evening at the Town Hall under the auspices of the Ceylon Indian Congress.

There was no offer of release of Mrs. Gandhi, said the External Affairs Secretary, Sir Olaf Caroe, in the course of a reply to Mr. K. J. Gupta in the Assembly this morning.

Mr. Gupta asked whether the External Affairs Secretary was aware of the statement made by Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai about the death in detention of Mrs. Gandhi, that "at various times the Government considered her release from detention for health reasons but she wished to remain with her husband and her wishes were respected." Was the above statement correct? If so, when was she offered release for the last time? If not, what did the Home Member propose to do to amend the incorrectness of the statement above quoted?

Sir O. Caroe: If the Hon'ble member refers to a statement attributed to the Agent-General and published in the "Hindustan Times," the answer is that the Agent-General made no such statement. He made no public statement at all on this subject. One correspondent, in reply to a telephonic enquiry, was informed that the death of Mrs. Gandhi was universally regretted. In reply to a further enquiry, he was told that the Government had considered the question of Mrs. Gandhi's release, but had come to the conclusion that there would be no kindness in releasing her since she

had the services of an eminent heart specialist in the Aga Khan Palace and had the further advantage of being with her husband. This information was based on the Government of India's communique of December 24, 1943, and it is correct that there was no offer of release. The message in the "Hindustan Times" appears to have been based on a misunderstanding of what was said to this correspondent and my reply will, I hope, serve to remove that misunderstanding.

Pandit L. K. Maitra asked why the censor or the press adviser did not intervene to stop the message if it was substantially incorrect.

Sir Olaf : My answer amounts to intervention in this matter.

In an earlier question Mr. Gupta asked if the Government of India gave information from time to time about the late Mrs. Gandhi's health to the Secretary of State for India and to their Agent-General Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai ; if so, would the correspondence between them and the Agent-General be placed on the table ?

Sir Olaf Caroe : No official information concerning Mrs. Gandhi's health was sent to the Agent-General. So far as the Secretary of State is concerned, the Hon. member should address the Home member. Bulletins were, of course, issued from time to time by the Bombay Gov-

ernment and a communique was published by the Government of India on December 24, 1943. These were, no doubt, reported by the press in America.

Q.—Is the information about Mrs. Gandhi's death sent to the Government of India's Agent-General in America? Are there any special instructions sent to him along with the news of the death to issue any statement concerning the health and detention of Mrs. Gandhi?

Ans.—Neither information nor instructions of any kind were sent to the Agent-General.



## KASTURBA THROUGH INDIAN EYES.

THERE is hardly a man or woman worthy of a name in the sacred soil of Hindustan who has not paid his homage to the departing 'soul, with the one exception of Mr. Jinnah who, like the Tennysonian gods of the Lotus-eaters' fame, enjoys in his golden-girdled house on the Malabar Hill and smiles when bolts are hurled on the people. He finds pleasure in the woes of the Congress. He relishes national disasters. When Allah Bux was assassinated in the flower of his career, the tin-god of the Mount Pleasant was unmoved. When Mahadev Desai passed away, the mount of the Iron Dictator remained equally pleasant. And now that the goddess of India winged away, "the uncrowned king of Muslim India" looked wolfishly down his hillock on the weak mortals wailing for an old hag instead of bending their knees and folding their hands before the great and glorious creator of Pakistan.

Bhulabhai Desai : "Ba's death is an event of the greatest sadness to the country. She has left a void which it will be impossible to fill. Her silent and effective work for the emancipation of India is only next to that of Bapu. Her humility and

self-effacement are the best expression of our ways of life and thought. She was the embodiment of all that is finest and noblest in India's womanhood. Our solace is in our conviction that Bapu has this strength and faith to sustain him in this greatest ordeal of his life."

**Mrs. Hansa Mehta :** " Gandhiji has lost a devoted wife and India one who was a real embodiment of India's womanhood."

**Mrs. Perinben Captain :** " She was like a mother to all of us. She was so simple and sincere. It would be very difficult to find one like her. Words fail me to express my feelings."

**Mrs. Urmilaben Mehta :** (General Secretary, All-India Women's Conference) " India has lost a great woman. It is difficult to express one's feelings when one remembers her devotion not only to Mahatma Gandhi as to the cause to which they dedicated. India mourns with Bapu the death of Kasturba."

**Dr. M. R. Jayakar :** " Mahadev Desai first, then Kasturba ; one sorrow after another. Government are lending unforeseen sanctity to prison life.

Years ago when I knew Mahatma well, he used to regard sorrows as a purification. If this is still his view these afflictions are so many pedestals placed in his path to climb higher and higher."

**Mr. Osman Sobhani :** " I am overwhelmed at the sad news. Her death is great loss to India's womanhood. Those who have known both Mahatma and Kasturba would pray that Gandhiji will have the strength to bear the heavy blow that has been struck while in prison."

**Mrs. Lilawati Munshi :** "Gandhiji lost a life's companion, and the nation a mother. She was a brave woman without showing it."

An Allahabad message stated :—Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya has sent the following telegram to Mahatma Gandhi, care of the Home Department, Government of Bombay :—

"Deeply grieved to hear that "Ba" has passed away. Matter for sincere thankfulness she has departed Sowbhagyavati, a thing our women pray for. Country shares your sorrow."

*"It is a calamity which has darkened every Indian home."*—Mr. A. K. Fazlul Haq.

*"The blow is too overwhelming for words. Our hearts go out to Gandhiji whose sorrow is shared by the whole nation"*—Mr. S. A. Brelvi.

*"It is a national tragedy. The circumstances surrounding Kasturba's passing away add poignancy to our grief."*—Mr. G. L. Mehta.

**Mr. A. K. Fazlul Haq :** "We were prepared for the worst, but we never thought that our mother would pass away so suddenly. Personally I am so shocked that I cannot collect my thoughts to make a statement expressing my feelings. It is a calamity which has darkened every Indian home.

**Mr. S. A. Brelvi :** Kasturba's death is the greatest personal loss Gandhiji has suffered. Coming as it does so soon after Mahadev Desai's death, the blow is too overwhelming for words. Our hearts go out to Gandhiji whose sorrow is shared by the whole nation.

**Mr. G. L. Mehta :** The circumstances surrounding Kasturba Gandhi's passing away add poignancy to our grief. Kasturba was a lifelong companion and helpmate to her eminent husband and devoted herself wholly to his work and his cause. She had so completely identified herself with Gandhiji that her demise is as much the nation's loss as of her family's. It is a national tragedy that Gandhiji will have to bear this loss in his present loneliness all by himself and the people who revere and love him can only convey their deep condolences in silence.

**Dr. B. C. Roy :** Throughout his eventful life, through joy and suffering Gandhiji has had Kasturba at his side giving him single-minded devotion and silent comradeship. News comes that Kasturba is no more. Gandhiji is a man of God. He will, I am convinced, bear the cross with fortitude and calmness because it is God's will.

**Mr. N. R. Sarker :** The passing away of Mrs. Gandhi would cast a pall of deep sorrow over the country. Though she had Mahatmaji near her, the fact that her last moments were spent in the Palace prison heightens the tragedy of it. Every Indian heart and also the hearts of many outside India would go out in deepest and most spontaneous sympathy to Mahatmaji. Each of us feels it like a personal loss and the whole nation mourns today the death of a saintly lady, an ideal mother, a devoted wife, and a resolute fighter in the struggle of freedom by the side of the greatest leader of our country and of our time.

**Dr. K. N. Katju :** Revered Kasturba's death will be widely mourned not only in millions of homes

in India but outside India also. In her death thousands of men and women who came in intimate contact with her feel they have lost a mother. Along with Mahatmajī she lived a dedicated life. I shall not dwell here on the circumstances which, very likely, hastened her death, and which will only add to the poignancy of the nation-wide grief and cause bitterness too

**Mr. Sri Prakasa :** I pay my humble tribute to the memory of the great lady, who chose such a holy day as *Sivaratri* to cast away her body, and my respectful condolence at the feet of our great leader. We are unable to demonstrate our sorrow by any public expression. I can only ask my countrymen in all reverence to undergo a 24-hour fast in memory of the noble soul and also as an expression of our grief and helplessness. May we be worthy of our Ba and Bapu!

**Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru** I am extremely sorry to hear of the death of Mrs Kasturba Gandhi, the devoted wife of Mahatma Gandhi. The circumstances in which she has died will add to the poignancy of the grief among her family, her relatives, her friends and her countrymen. I have no doubt that the Mahatma will bear the loss—irreparable as it is—with that spirit of philosophic calm and resignation which is characteristic of him.

**Sir Purushotamdas Thakurdas :** I am sure that sympathies of the whole world will go out to Mahatma in this loss of his while he is in jail.

**Mr. Bhulabhai Desai :** Kasturba's death is an event of great sadness to the country. She has left a

void which it is impossible to fill. Her silent but effective work for womanhood of India is only next to that of Bapu. Her humility and self-effacement are the best expression of our ways of life and thought. She was the embodiment of all that is finest and noblest in India's womanhood. Our solace lies in conviction that Bapu has strength and faith to sustain him in his greatest ordeal of life.

**Mr. K. M. Munshi:** Kasturba's death removes from us a noblest woman of modern time. She was like Sita and Savitri in her single-minded self-surrender to her husband. We also loved her as mother ; feel the loss of mother.

**Mr. M. R. Masani :** Kasturba Gandhi's greatness lies in her self-effacement. She was content to subordinate her own feelings and desires to furthering the cause of India's freedom embodied in her husband's life work. Our hearts go out to our great national leader in his loss which is all the more grievous because of his enforced isolation.

**Mr. C. Rajagopalachari :** " Ba was born to be queen and she attained that status through a queer and toilsome path. Let us reserve our emotion for the living. The dead do not require it, for their play is over. May the peace of Ba and Mahadev Desai be undisturbed."

Mr. Savarkar has sent the following telegram to Mahatma Gandhi : " With a heavy heart I mourn the death of Kasturba. A faithful wife and an affectionate mother, she died a noble death in the service of God and man. Your grief is shared by the whole nation."

Mr. M. R. Masani, Mayor of Bombay said that he on behalf of the citizens of Bombay extended to Mahatma Gandhi his respectful condolences.

Mr. K. M. Munshi said "To Gandhiji, strong as he is beyond the measures of man, her death is a great blow. We, who loved her as a mother, feel the loss of the motherless."

Mr. K. M. Munshi said : "Kasturba's death removes from us the noblest woman of modern time. A true comrade of Gandhiji, the heroic soul who lived that he may fulfil his flaming mission in life, she was like Sita and Savitri of the Epic in her single-minded self-surrender to her husband. To Gandhiji, strong as he is beyond measure, her death is a blow. We who loved her as mother feel the loss of a motherless."

Mr. M. R. Masani, Mayor, said : Kasturba Gandhi's greatness lay in her self-effacement. Our hearts go out to our great national leader in his loss which is all the more grievous because of his enforced isolation."

Dr. M. R. Jaykar said : "Mahadev Desai first, then Kasturba ; one sorrow after another. Government are lending unforeseen sanctity to prison life. ... These affliction are so many pedestals placed in his path to climb higher and higher."

Dr. B. C. Roy, interviewed at Calcutta, said "Kasturba is no more. Aga Khan's palace has become

doubly sacred to those who knew the single-mindedness, unstinted devotion and unobtrusive services which both she and Mahadev Desai rendered to Gandhiji during the long years that he has been bearing the burden of leading this whole sub-continent in its march towards the goal."

Seth Pranlal Devkar, Nanjee, President, Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, in the course of a telegram to Mahatma Gandhi says: "The committee of the Indian Merchants' Chamber have been deeply grieved to learn the sad news of the death of Shrimati Kasturba. Her passing away is a great national loss, which is shared with you by the entire nation."

Mr. S. M. Amil, Secretary, All India Muslim Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bombay, has sent the following telegram to Mr. Gandhi:—

"We are deeply grieved to learn the sad news of Mrs. Gandhis' demise. She was a symbol of Indian womanhood. Muslim Merchants share your sorrow and offer you their heartfelt condolence."

Mr. M. S. Aney, representative of the Government of India in Ceylon, now in Madras, sent the following telegram to the Home Member, Government of Bombay: "Please convey Mahatma Gandhi my profound grief at



passing away of Kasturba and sympathies with him in his irreparable loss."

NEW DELHI, March 10.—Writing to Mr. Devadas Gandhi a few hours before the passing away of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu said: "What can anyone say at this time. Thoughts and prayers of the entire nation are centred round that lonely little man of sorrows who is called upon to watch and endure this most poignant heart-breaking of all his life experiences. You know my love for Ba. I pray the gallant suffering spirit might find quick release from the agony of her mortality and take its winged way to her proper place in eternity among the great heroines of India—for in her simple unpretentious and unlettered way she has been a very great contemporary figure. My love to her in this and all other lives."—United Press.

*"Little is ever heard of her, little is ever written of her, but the life at Sevagram has flown round Kasturba Gandhi dominated by the spirit of her sacrifices and her untold patience and understanding. She is a great little lady, in whom is vested all that India prizes most. Her gifts to the nation have been no less than her husband's inasmuch as she has been the silent participator of all that has originated from him."—Ela Sen.*

## KASTURBA THROUGH FOREIGN EYES,

IF the world were a balance, Kasturba is the weighing woman. Her death has weighed England and America in the pans of the great goddess of Democracy. The American side has been the heavier. The British side of the democratic pan has gone up to the beam on the rosy altar of Indian sympathy. Or rather the sympathy for distressed India. India distressed. Distressed no doubt through the short-sightedness of the cyclopes behind the British throne. While the demise of Kasturba Gandhi has flashed from coast to coast across the continent of America, the British Broadcasting Corporation, following in the noble footsteps of all-mighty Jinnah, has considered it beneath its dignity to waste breath on the bad old Indian beggar woman, the wife of thin brown mickey mouse of a man called Gandhi, of the most distasteful South African fame :

“ Hang old Gandhi

On the sour apple tree !”

While the British press gave but a scanty reference, the American press flashed into front page headlines :—

NEW YORK, Feb. 23.—The news of Mrs. Gandhi's death was made known to millions of

Americans in news bulletins broadcast from coast to coast. Hundreds of American newspapers gave her passing front page prominence.

Dr. Taraknath Das, Professor of the New York City College, described Mrs. Gandhi's death as the greatest loss to Indian womanhood in recent years. Mrs. Gandhi was an outstanding example of kind character that can be produced by Indian tradition and morals. Although most unassuming, she was a great leader, who never compromised with her ideals."

Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, Agent-General for India in Washington, said: "At various times the Government considered her release from detention for health reasons, but she wished to remain with her husband and her wishes were respected. Furthermore, living at the palace, she had the benefit of care from an eminent doctor on the premises. The news of her death has been received with deep regret here."

Dr. Sarat Mukerjee, a prominent physician, said: "India must consider this one of her greatest losses, particularly deplorable at this time of crises."

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25.—The death of Mrs. Gandhi was mourned widely among officials and other high circles here.

Congressman John Cofee said: "The pas-

sing away of Mrs. Gandhi is a great blow to the spirit behind the Indian nationalist movement."

Congressman Jerry Woorchi said ; " I deeply regret to learn of death and share with Gandhiji this grievous loss."

Congressman Will Rogers (Junior) said : " The news has stunned me as it did the great part of the United States. Her death is India's and the world's loss."

The American press has also mourned the passing away of the wife of Mr. Gandhi. They have paid tributes to her prominently.

The " Herald Tribune " praised her as a " loyal and patient assistant to Mr. Gandhi and a great example for millions of Indian women."

The " New York Times " writes : " When Mr. Gandhi's demonstrations landed him in jail his wife frequently took the lead by continuing the political agitation despite her frail condition."

SWARAJ HOUSE, LONDON.—In a telegram sent to Mr. Gandhi on Feb. 23, 1944, members of the Swaraj House " express their deep sorrow at the passing of Mrs. Gandhi in detention and convey their heartfelt condolence with Mahatma Gandhi and the bereaved family."

INDIA LEAGUE, LONDON.—The Labour members of Parliament, Mr. William

Dobbie and Mr. Raginald Sorensen and the Secretary of the India League, Mr. Krishna Menon, have sent the following telegram to Mahatma Gandhi on the death of his wife. "The India League and friends, British and Indian, send you their profound sympathy in your loss. Many people feel deeply for you."

A tribute to the memory of Mrs. Gandhi was paid on Saturday night Feb. 26, 1944, at a meeting of Indians in London organized by the Swaraj House. The meeting conveyed its feeling of deepest sorrow and heartfelt condolence to Mahatma Gandhi and the bereaved family and added, "we are convinced that the undying memory of her great sacrifices and disinterested services to the Indian people will serve as a shining example to all those who are struggling for the freedom of our motherland."

LONDON, Feb. 27.—A resolution expressing the conviction that the cause of national liberty for which Mrs. Gandhi died in detention will not fail was passed at a public meeting convened by the Committee of Indian Congressmen in Great Britain to-day (Sunday).

The Labour M.P. Mr. William Cove, and other speakers associated British friends with Indians in their grief at the death of Mrs. Gandhi.—*Reuter*.

BOMBAY, Feb. 27.—The Imperial Indian Citizenship Association has received a cable from the Indian National Association, Zanzibar stating that the Indian community is deeply grieved at the sad demise of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi.

LONDON, Feb. 26.—A tribute to the memory of Mrs. Gandhi was paid on Saturday night at a meeting of Indians in London organised by the Swaraj House. The meeting conveyed its feeling of deepest sorrow and heartfelt condolences to Mahatma Gandhi and the bereaved family and added, "we are convinced that the undying memory of her great sacrifices and disinterested services to the Indian people will serve as shining example to all those who are struggling for the freedom of our motherland."—Reuter.

LONDON, Feb. 24.—Mata Kasturba Gandhi's death was briefly announced in London papers yesterday. Many Labour and Liberal Members of Parliament conveyed through the "United Press of India" their sincerest condolences to Mahatma Gandhi and expressed the hope that at least now Lord Wavell would immediately release Mahatmaji and Pt. Nehru and thus bring the sad Indian story to an end.

LONDON, Feb. 24.—The following resolution was despatched on Wednesday to Mr.

Gandhi care of the Bombay Government :  
“ The Committee of Indian Congressmen deeply mourns the loss of India's noblest lady. Her life of silent dedication will for ever inspire generations of men and women. Her death in detention will bring India's liberation nearer.”—  
Reuter.

Memorial Services for Mrs. Gandhi were held in Durban and Johannesburg on Wednesday when most Indian business premises were closed during the afternoon. Resolutions of sympathy to Mahatma Gandhi and his family were passed.

At the Johannesburg meeting which was presided over by Mr. L. Cachalia of the Nationalist group of the Transvaal Indian Congress, a memorial fund was inaugurated and 5,000 sterling contributed to the memorial the form of which will be decided by a committee and will be erected in Mr. Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement which he gave to the Indian community and may take the form of a girls college or similar institution.

The meeting passed a resolution saying that her death “in the prison of British bureaucracy” was significant of the sacrifices of several Indian martyrs in the struggle for emancipation from British imperialism.

In a tribute to Mrs. Gandhi, Paramhansa Yogananda, noted Indian international religious leader, who is in Hollywood (California), said : " Though I am opposed to Indian provincialism I feel that the Mahatma's wife was a woman of great culture, a great force behind the Indian movement and very great lover of democracy and liberty for her people. Her death is a great loss to the Indian cause. The fact that she died in prison is no credit to the British, although they may have had reason for incarceration of her husband."

NEW YORK, Feb. 23.—The death of Mrs. Gandhi has profoundly shocked India's American friends.

LONDON, Feb. 23.—The " Times " and " Manchester Guardian," among other papers this morning, make sympathetic references to the death of Mrs. Gandhi.

The correspondent of the " Manchester Guardian " says : " In many ways Mrs. Gandhi was a remarkably independent personality but she was a martyr to her husband's cause, having learned early in her marriage life the uselessness of resisting beyond the point of his firmly held principles and austere practices. Her many friends, while grieving at her death, will rejoice at her release."



The "Times" says : "She was first and last a meek and patient wife and mother proud of but not understanding save in a vague way the enormous influence of her Mahatma husband."—*Reuter*.

LONDON, Feb. 25.—The circumstances of the death of Mrs. Gandhi will form the subject of a question which the Labour member, Mr. Reginald Sorensen, is to address to the Secretary for India, Mr. Amery. Mr. Sorensen will ask whether Mrs. Gandhi was in detention at time of her death and whether her husband was allowed to attend her funeral.—*Reuter*.

WESTMINSTER, March 2.—The British Government's regret at death of Mrs. Gandhi on February 22nd at the age of 74, was expressed by Mr. Butler, President of the Board of Education, speaking in the House of Commons today (Thursday) on behalf of Mr. Amery.

He added, "when it occurred, she was in detention in company with Mr. Gandhi. She was receiving all possible medical care and attention, not only from her regular attendants, but from those desired by her family, and was able to see her near relatives. No request for release was received and the Government of India considered it would be no act of kind-

ness to her or her family to remove her from the Aga Khan's palace."

Replying to another question Mr. Butler said that Mr. Gandhi was permitted to attend her funeral. He added, " I have information that the funeral rites took place at the request of Mr. Gandhi in the grounds of the Aga Khan's palace at Poona and friends and relatives were present."—Reuter.

## LEST WE FORGET

India still is miles backward in hero-worship. We have still to keep evergreen the memory of our great departed souls. No other country, with the exception of Ireland, has erected such a sublime and stately altar to receive the blood of political martyrs in a steady stream. The names of our heroes are writ in sand. When India is free, and not until India is free, can we make marble monuments encircled with a pulsating memory, the bloodless substitutes for our noble men and women who have diced away their lives so cheaply on the chess-board of our country.

It is a good omen that plans are already afoot for erecting a suitable memorial for Kasturba, the noblest daughter of Mother India, who lived herself to be the mother and mentor of Young India in the toughest school of politics and the roughest home of poverty, the grinding mill-stones of everlasting hunger.

The question of raising a suitable memorial to Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi engaged the attention of a few Congressmen in Bombay on February 25, 1944. A fund would be raised and called Kasturba Memorial Fund. The trustees would be appointed to administer it.

MADRAS, March 6.—Glowing tributes were paid to the memory of Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi at a huge public meeting held at the Victoria Public Hall last evening under the auspices of a large number of women's organisations of Madras City and the province, including the All-India Women's Conference, the Women's Indian Association, the Andhra Ladies Union, the Gujrati Ladies Union and the Punjabi Ladies Association. Mrs. Sita Devi, Bar-at-law, presided, a resolution was passed placing on record profound sorrow at the passing away of Mata Kasturba "under circumstances that have prevented the paying of public homage to her in a manner that the people would have wished to pay to a lady of such great eminence" and conveying sympathy to Mahatma Gandhi and the family.

By another resolution the meeting decided to take steps to perpetuate the memory of Mata Kasturba by setting up a committee to raise Rs. 5 lakhs for erecting a suitable memorial, preferably in the shape of an industrial enterprise for the uplift of the needy and destitute women. Donations to tune of over Rs. 1,000 were announced at the conclusion of the meeting.

NEW DELHI, March 12.—Mr. A.V. Thakar Secretary of the Kasturba-Gandhi National Mem-

Memorial Fund has issued the following statement :

“ In pursuance of the appeal issued to the country on the 9th instant by prominent men and women for the raising of a fund of Rs. 75 lakhs in memory of the late Shri Kasturba Gandhi and to be presented to Mahatma Gandhi on his 75th birthday which falls on October 2 1944, I am issuing this first press note, detailing the procedure of collection that is to be followed. It is now absolutely essential that sympathisers and sponsors of the memorial all over the country should immediately set about the task of organising collections. Actual cash collections must be made only after the receipts to be supplied by the headquarters from Bombay, as explained below, have become available. These are being got ready with the utmost despatch. But the magnitude of the great national venture, which must conclude by the end of September does not permit of any loss of time. I, therefore, earnestly exhort all those on whose whole-hearted co-operation we may rely to undertake preparatory arrangements without delay.

“ The following plan has been tentatively adopted for the organisation of collections for the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund. It is expected that the formation of various committees mentioned below will be completed before the end of this month so that intensive

collections may be undertaken forthwith. As stated in the original appeal issued on the 9th March, it is hoped that before 2nd October, 1944 on which Mahatma Gandhi completes 75 years, the collections would have far exceeded the auspicious figure of 75 lakhs mentioned in the appeal.

“ The collections will be made generally by provincial committees set up in the linguistic provinces. Similar committees will be formed in the Indian States. The central committee will request sympathisers in each such province and state to take immediate steps to constitute these committees. The committees will be responsible to the Central Committee in all matters concerning the collections and the Central Committee will be fully empowered to issue instruction to all committees and person engaged in the work.

“ The provincial committees will frame rules and lay down procedure convenient to them and will also constitute district, tehsil and town committees, wherever necessary or desirable.

“ It will however be convenient to form special committees in big industrial centres which will conduct their own collections, and deal direct with the Central Office. But all their collections will ultimately be to the ac-

count of the province concerned. Where territorial areas overlap, or where special circumstances warrant, such as the cities of Bombay and Madras, including suburbs, the centre will create special units.

“Steps will also be taken to arrange collections from Indians overseas who may be anxious to participate in the national memorial.

The collections will be through printed receipts suitably designed in the denominations of Re. 1, Rs. 5, Rs. 10, Rs. 50, Rs. 100, Rs. 500, Rs. 1000, Rs. 10,000, Rs. 25,000, Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 100,000. They will be serially numbered and will be supplied by the Central Office. No other receipts will be valid. Arrangements are being made for the early dispatch of receipts.

“All collections shall be deposited to the credit of the fund into the Central Bank of India, the Bank of India, the United Commercial Bank and their branches and any other scheduled bank selected by a provincial state or special committee. But the Central Office alone will have the power to operate these accounts and the expenditure of the provincial and other committees shall be met by the Central Office. All cheques and postal orders should be crossed and drawn in favour of Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund, and sent to the office of the provincial committee concerned. Cash donations.

should also be deposited with office of the committees concerned. All committees must notify, without delay, the address at which donations will be accepted and receipts issued.

“ Every provincial, state and special committee will arrange with newspapers in its area for the publication of lists of donations once or twice a week. The names of those who wish to remain anonymous will not be disclosed, but every such amount shall be acknowledged in the press lists. It may not, however, be convenient for some newspapers to publish amounts of less than Rs. 25 for want of space. The lists supplied to such newspapers should, therefore, be prepared accordingly and amounts below the minimum may be lumped together.

“ A complete list should, however, be maintained for record and also supplied to newspapers which may be in a position to publish them. While lists forwarded by local committees will be published in the newspapers concerned the Central Committee will issue to the press consolidated statements of collections once every fortnight, together with a report of the progress of the fund.

“ It is hoped that newspapers in the country will extend their fullest co-operation in the national endeavour by giving publicity to dona-



tion lists, and press notes issued by the Central and provincial committees from time to time and by their own individual support. It is further hoped that proprietors, editors and journalists will, in their individual capacities, extend their assistance to their provincial or local committees to the utmost possible extent.

“ All correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund, Scindia House, Ballard Estate, Bombay, where Shri Valkunth L. Mehta and Swami Anand will be in charge of the office as Joint Secretaries.

The following is a supplementary list of signatories to the appeal for the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund:—The Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, the Rt. Hon. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Rt. Hon. Mr. Jayakar, Mr. N. C. Kelkar, Prof. D. K. Karve, Mr. K. Natarajan, Dr. B. C. Roy, Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukerjee, Raja Maheshwar Dyal Seth, Mr. Mehr Chand Khanna, Dr. Khan Sahib, Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi, Mrs. Vijaylaxmi Pandit, Dr. Bhagwandas, Mr. Sriprakash, Dr. Jawaharlal Rahatgi, Mr. Kiron Shanker Roy, Mr. M. R. Masani (Mayor of Bombay), Sir T. Vijayaragnavachari, Dewan Udaipur, Mr. Anantria Pattani, Dewan Bhavnagar, Maharaj Kumar of Vizianagram, Mr. Muthuranga.

Mudaliar, Mr. Rathindranath Tagore, Seth Ramkrishna Dalmia, Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer, Mr. K. Srinivasan ("Hindu," Madras), Mr. Jamshed Mehta, Prof. P.A. Wadia, Mr. Homi Mody, Sir Sorabji Saklatwala, Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, Sir Shantidas Askuram, Sir Chunilal B. Mehta, Seth Ambalal Serabhal, Seth Walchand Hirachand, Seth Dharamsew Khatau, Seth Tulsidas Kilachand, Seth Hussainbhai Lalji, Seth Krishanaraj Thakersey, Seth Govindram Seksaria, Seth Ramdev Poddar, Mr. Ramnath Goenka and Seth Partab Daldas.

NEW DELHI, March 8.—A fund to be called the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund and to be presented to Mahatma Gandhi on his 75th birthday to be spent for the welfare and education of women in India is proposed in an appeal issued to-day by some 40 prominent leaders headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya :

The appeal says:—"The sad death of Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi has caused a nation-wide grief and mourning. The position she has held in Indian life for these 30 years, coupled with her passing away in prison, has stirred the country as nothing else in recent times. The greatest in the land have showered their tributes and in countless homes from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, men, women and children, have been shedding tears of affection and reverence. We are convinced that the people of India will not rest satisfied until they have been able to do something concrete to perpetuate her memory on a scale worthy of her and themselves.

“ The nation will also expect that any memorial in the name of Shri Kasturba should be such as will be identified with at least one of the great humanitarian tasks to which Mahatma Gandhi has dedicated his life. We, therefore, propose that a fund be raised from all over India and from the rich and the poor to be called the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund and be presented to Mahatma Gandhi on his next birthday to be spent for the welfare and education of women in India. We have here in mind the need, among other things, for the spread of the principles of basic education in which Gandhiji has been a firm believer and which have obtained unanimous support in educationist circles in the country. In view of the uniqueness of the occasion, we appeal to the nation to aim at collecting a purse of not less than 75 lakhs of rupees to mark the age of 75 years which Mahatma Gandhi will have attained on October next.

“ It is not possible for any Indian now or hereafter to mention Gandhiji's name without deep emotion and pride, but this emotion and pride have value only in so far as they represent true appreciation of what Gandhiji's life connotes. It is as servant of humanity—and India as part of humanity among whom his lot has been cast—that Gandhiji is and will continue to be known and revered. It has never been his aim to be recognized either as a statesman or as a politician, and if his influence extends to the field of politics, of economics, of social progress, it is because of his absolute identification with all that goes to alleviate human suffering and to promote the happiness and welfare of mankind.

"It is, therefore, but meet that the celebration of the 76th birthday of greatest humanitarian of our time be associated with a fitting tribute by his countrymen to the memory of his life-partner whose name the country will continue to cherish for all time to come."

For the organisation of the collection, and subsequent management of the fund, we have appointed the following committee, who will also act as trustees of the fund, with power to co-opt :—

Trustees :—

1. Sir S. Radhakrishnan, 2. Mr. G. D. Birla, 3. Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, 4. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, 5. Dr. K. N. Katju, 6. Mr. J. R. D. Tata, 7. Mr. Kasturbhai Lalbhai, 8. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, 9. Lady Vithaldas Thackersey, 10. Dr. Zakir Husain, 11. Mr. K. M. Munshi, 12. Mr. V. Thakkar, 13. Mr. Devadas Gandhi, 14. Mr. Shantikumar Narottam Morarji.

Mr. A. V. Thakkar has kindly consented to serve as Secretary.

"As we have stated above, the fund is to be presented to Mahatma Gandhi on his next birthday. We hope that by then he will have been released and that it may be possible for him to function as chairman of the trust but, should that, unfortunately, not be possible, the trustees will elect a substitute chairman for the duration and be responsible for the operation of the fund.

"The headquarters of the fund will be in Bombay. The committee will take immediate steps to form provincial committees to carry on the work of collection in the provinces and States. The work of

collection in the various parts of the country will be carried on in strict accordance with rules which the committee will frame and the secretary will issue instructions and press notes from time to time for the information and guidance of workers and the general public.

"We have no doubt that all classes of people give their most enthusiastic co-operation in this great venture and we would appeal to all those who have been considering the raising of local funds in different parts of the country in memory of Kasturba to merge their efforts with this proposal of an all-India memorial and to make it a complete success."

Signatories to the appeal are headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and include the first nine trustees and the Secretary and also Sir Snri Ram, Mr. G. L. Mehta, Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Pandit H. N. Kunzru, Mr. N. M. Joshi, Mr. Jugal Kishore Birla, Mr. S. Brelvi, Mr. P. N. Bannerjee, Mr. N. R. Sarker, Sir A. R. Dalal, Mrs. Subbaroyan, Mrs Rameshwari Nehru, Mr. Kamla Narayan Bajaj, Mr. A. C. Dutta, Seth L. N. Gadodia, Lala Narayan Dutt, Mr. B. Das, Mr. Pranlal Deokaran Nanai and Sir Badridas Goenka.—A.P.I.

*"If ye have one pice only, buy bread of it ; if two, one worth of bread and one worth of flower."*

*Prophet Mahomed*

APPENDIX  
GANDHI FACES THE FAIR SEX

1

MARRIAGE BY CHOICE

Q. I am a young man of twenty-two years. Is it legitimate for me to refuse to oblige my father in the matter of marriage if I do not wish to marry?

A. According to the *shastras* and also reason, children when they reach the age of discretion, which the former prescribe as sixteen, become their parents' friends, *i.e.*, are free from parental dictation. They are still bound to consult them and defer to their wishes wherever they can. You are full-grown, and in a matter so vital as marriage, you should respectfully refuse to marry if the match is not to your liking or for any other valid reason.

2

CONQUEST BY LOVE

Q. I am a young man of twenty-three years. For the last two years I have been using pure khadi only. For the last twenty-eight days I have been spinning regularly in my leisure time. But my wife refuses to wear khadi. She says it

is too coarse. Should I compel her to use khadi? I may also mention that I find our temperaments are incompatible.

A. This is the common lot of life in India. I have often said that the husband, being the stronger and the more educated party, has to act as tutor to his wife and put up with her defects, if any. In your case you have to bear the incompatibility and conquer your wife by love, never by compulsion. It follows that you cannot compel your wife to use khadi. But you should trust your love and example to make her do the right thing. Remember that your wife is not your property any more than you are hers. She is your better-half. Treat her as such. You will not regret the experiment.

### 3

#### “ A CLOSE BOOK ”

Q. I am married. My wife is a good woman. We have children. We have lived together in peace hitherto. Unfortunately she came across someone whom she has adopted as her *guru*. She has received *gurumantra* from him, and her life has become a close book for me. This has given rise to coldness between us. I do not know what I should do. Rama, as portrayed by Tulsidas, is my ideal. Should

I not do what Rama did, and cut off all connection with my wife ?

A. Tulsidas has taught us that we may not indiscriminately imitate the great. What they may do with impunity we may not. Think of Rama's love for Sita. Tulsidas tells us that before the appearance of the golden deer the real Sita at the behest of Rama disappeared in the clouds and the mere shadow remained. This fact was a close secret even from Lakshmana. The poet further tells that Rama had a purpose which was divine. It was with this shadow of Sita that Rama dealt after the appearance of the golden deer on the scene. Even so Sita never resented any single act of Rama. All such data would be lacking in any mundane case, as they are lacking in yours. Therefore, my advice to you would be to bear with your wife and not interfere with her so long as you have no cause of complaint against her conduct. If you adopted someone as your *guru* and had your *gurumantra* and if you did not impart the secret to your wife, I am sure you would not relish her resenting your refusal to disclose the secret. I admit that between husband and wife there should be no secrets from one another. I have a very high opinion of the marriage tie. I hold that husband and wife merge in each other. They are one in two or two in one. But these things cannot be



regulated mechanically. All things considered, therefore, since you are a liberal-minded husband, you should have no difficulty in respecting your wife's reluctance to share the secret with you.

## 4

## PROMISCUITY

Q. I should like to know whether you would approve of men and women Satyagrahis, mixing promiscuously and working together, or whether they should be organised into separate units with a clear delimitation of the field of each. My experience is that the former must lead, as it has led, to a lot of indiscipline and corruption. If you agree with me, what rules would you suggest to combat the potential evil?

A. I should like to have separate units. Women have more than enough work amongst women. Our women-folk are terribly neglected, and hundreds of intelligent women workers of sterling honesty are required to work among them. On principle, too, I believe in the two sexes functioning separately. But I would lay down no hard and fast rules. Good sense must govern the relations between the two. There should be no barrier erected between the two. Their mutual behaviour should be natural and spontaneous.

## 5

## CARNALITY

Q. You say that motherhood is sublime but sex is bad. From the spiritual and eugenic point of view don't you agree that test-tube technique of begetting babies is ideal since it altogether eliminates lust and carnality from prae-creation.

A. I would reconcile myself to your method if carnality itself can be eradicated thereby. So long as I hold to the view that carnality prevents man or woman from rising to the fullest height possible, so long must I rebel against these artificial methods of procreation. Your method, as far as I can see, can only result in multiplying idiots or monsters, not human beings, thrown into the sea of passions which it should be their pride to subjugate. But I own I belong to an age that is perhaps dying. The new age to come, when men and women will walk, if they at all do, only for pleasure but go to their work on wheels or fly to it, and when the institution of marriage and all it implies will be abolished, does not enthuse me.

## 6

## BRAHMACHARYA

Q. I am a genuine seeker after brahmacharya. But in spite of all my prayerful effort I

am sinking deeper and deeper into self-indulgence. I cannot blame my partner for it. My circumstances do not permit me to enforce the rule about segregation.

You advocate and believe in the efficacy of vows. You have said in the *Harijan* that 'for the weak in mind and soul vows are like tonics.' But how will you administer this tonic to a case like mine who has not the strength of will to carry out the vow he has taken? Had I such a strong will, the necessity for taking vows would not have arisen.

A. Let me bluntly tell you that I do not believe in your genuineness, not that you are wilfully lying. You are unconsciously ungentle. If you are genuine, you will at least observe the rules of the game. You give up your case when you say you cannot segregate yourself from your wife for want of room. I have never heard such an excuse. If you take the vow, you must at least produce the necessary atmosphere around you for its observance. Every one who has successfully carried out the vow has invariably observed this first condition. If you are living in only one room, you should go elsewhere or send away your wife or have a relative to sleep in the same room. The question is how far you are determined. It may be that you want to observe brahmacharya because you have read

much about it and would like to be classed among brahmacharies. I know many such young men. If that is your case, you should not make the attempt. One must have a burning desire to live that life. If you have it, you will adopt the measures that all aspirants have invariably adopted. You are then bound to succeed. If you have not read *Self-restraint* versus *Self-indulgence*, you should read it.

## 7

## A CYCLE OF BIRTHS

Q. You have failed to take even your own son with you, and he has gone astray. May it not, therefore, be well for you to rest content with putting your own house in order?

A. This may be taken to be a taunt, but I do not take it so. For the question had occurred to me before it did to anyone else. I am a believer in previous births and rebirths. All our relationships are the result of the *samskars* we carry from our previous births. God's laws are inscrutable and are the subject of endless search. No one will fathom them.

This is how I regard the case of my first son. I regard the birth of a bad son to me as the result of my evil past whether of this life or previous. My first son was born when I was in

a state of infatuation. Besides, he grew whilst I was myself growing and whilst I know myself very little. I do not claim to know myself fully even to-day, but I certainly know myself better than I did then. For years he remained away from me, and his upbringing was not entirely in my hands. That is why he has been at a loose end. His grievance against me has always been that I sacrificed him and his brothers at the altar of what I wrongly believed to be public cause. My other sons have laid more or less the same blame at my door, but with a good deal of hesitation, and they have generously forgiven me. My eldest son was the direct victim of my experiments—radical changes in my life and so he cannot forget what he regards as my blunders. Under the circumstances I believe I am myself the cause of the loss of my son, and have therefore learnt patiently to bear it. And yet it is not quite correct to say that I have lost him. For it is my constant prayer that God may make him see the error of his ways and forgive me my shortcomings, if any, in serving him. It is my firm faith that man is by nature going higher, and so I have not at all lost hope that some day he will wake up from his slumber of ignorance. Thus he is part of my field of experiments in ahimsa. When or whether I shall succeed I have never

bothered to know. It is enough for my own satisfaction that I do not slacken my efforts in doing what I know to be my duty. 'To work thou hast the right, never to the fruits thereof' is one of the golden precepts of the *Gita*.

## 8

## THE MIGHTY WOMAN

There is no *poor* woman. Poor woman is mightier than man, and I am quite prepared to demonstrate it to you if you come to the villages of India. Any woman there would tell you that, if she did not want it, there was no man born of woman who could compel her. I can say this from my own experience in relation to my wife, and mine is no solitary instance. If the will to die rather than yield is there, no monster can make the woman yield. No, it is a mutual affair. Man and woman both are a mixture of the brute and the divine, and if we can subdue the brute, it is well and good.

—*Harijan*, February 1, 1935.

## 9

## MISCONCEPTIONS

If you misconceive your premises, you are bound to come to wrong conclusions. Don't

is that they do not exercise self-restraint, but become lunatics. I carry on correspondence with many of these people, and they describe their own ailments to me. I simply say that if I were to present them with this method of birth-control, they would lead far worse lives.

—*Harijan*, January 25, 1936.

## 14

## LUST AND LOVE

*Mrs. Margaret Sanger.*—What was to be done with couples who wanted to resist the impulses of sex, and yet could not do so?

*Gandhiji.*—When both want to satisfy animal passion, without having to suffer the consequences of their act, it is not love, it is lust. But if love is pure, it will transcend animal passion and will regulate itself. We have not had enough education of the passions. When a husband says, "Let us not have children but let us have relations," what is that but animal passion? If they do not want to have more children, they should simply refuse to unite. Love becomes lust, the moment you make it a means for the satisfaction of animal needs. It is just the same with food. If food is taken only for pleasure, it is lust. You do not take chocolates for the sake of

satisfying your hunger. You take them for pleasure and then ask the doctor for an antidote. Perhaps, you tell the doctor that whisky befogs your brain, and he gives you an antidote. Would it not be better not to take chocolates or whisky?  
—*Harijan*, January 25, 1936.

## 15

## SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP

*Mrs. Sanger*.—Must the sexual union take place only three or four times in an entire lifetime?

*Gandhiji*.—Why should people not be taught that it is immoral to have more than three or four children and when that they have had that number they should sleep separately? If they are taught this, it would harden into custom. And if social reformers cannot impress this idea upon the people, why not a law? If husband and wife have four children, they would have had sufficient animal enjoyment. Their love may, then, be lifted to a higher plane. Their bodies have met. After they had the children they wanted, their love transforms itself into a spiritual relationship. If these children die and they want more, then they may meet again. Why must people be slaves of this passion when they are not of others? When you give them



education in birth-control, you tell them that it is their duty. You say to them that if they do not do this thing they will interrupt their spiritual evolution. You do not even talk of regulation. After giving them education in birth control, you do not say to them: "Thus far and no farther." You ask people to drink temperately, as though it was possible to remain temperate. I know these temperate people.

—*Harijan*, January 25, 1936

## 16

### BIRTH CONTROL THROUGH SELF-CONTROL

I believe I have no superstition in me. Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion because it is ancient. There are some fundamentals of life, which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life.

Birth-control through self-control is no doubt difficult. But no one has yet been known seriously to dispute its efficiency, and even superiority over the use of contraceptives.

Then, I feel that the full acceptance of the *shastras*, as to the strictly confined use of the sexual act, makes the observance of self-control much easier than if one regards the act itself as

a source of supreme enjoyment. The function of the organs of generation is merely to generate progeny, obviously of the highest type possible, for the married couple. This can and should only take place when both parties desire, not sexual union but progeny which is the result of such union. Desire for such union, therefore, without the desire for progeny, must be considered unlawful and should be restrained.

—*Harijan*, March 1, 1936.

## 17

### ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Man is, undoubtedly, an artist and creator. Undoubtedly, he must have beauty and, therefore, colour. His artistic and creative nature at its best taught him to discriminate, and to know that any conglomeration of colours was no mark of beauty, nor every sense of enjoyment good in itself. His eye for art taught man to seek enjoyment in usefulness. Thus, he learnt at an early stage of his evolution that he was to eat, not for its own sake, as some of us still do, but he should eat to enable him to live. At a later stage he learnt further that there was neither beauty nor joy in living for its own sake, but that he must live to serve his fellow-creatures, and through them his Maker.

Similarly, when he pondered over the phenomenon of the pleasurable of sexual union, he discovered that like every other organ of sense this one of generation had its use and abuse. And he saw that its true function, its right use, was to restrict it to generation. Any other use he saw was fraught with very serious consequences, as well to the individual as to the race. It is hardly necessary for me to prolong the argument. —*Harijan*, April 4, 1936.

## 18

## MODERN SOCIETY

There is nothing in our society to-day which would conduce to self-control. Our very upbringing is against it. The primary concern of parents is to marry their children anyhow, so that they may breed like rabbits. If they are girls, they are married at as early an age as they conveniently can be, irrespective of their moral welfare. The marriage ceremony is one long-drawn-out agony of feasting and frivolity. The householder's life is in keeping with the past life. Holidays and social enjoyments are so arranged as to allow one the greatest latitude for sensuous living. The literature, that is almost thrust on one, generally ponders to the animal passion. The most modern literature almost

teaches that indulgence in it is a duty, and total abstinence a sin. Is it any wonder if control of the sexual appetite has become difficult, if not almost impossible? If, then, birth-control through self-restraint is the most desirable and sensible and totally harmless method, we must change the social ideal and environment. The only way to bring about the desired end is for individuals, who believe in the method of self-control, to make the beginning themselves, and with unquenchable faith to affect their surroundings. —*Harijan*, March 21, 1936.

## 19

## PLATONIC MARRIAGE

Q. But if there is no desire for progeny, should there be no marriage?

A. Certainly not. I do not believe in Platonic marriages. In certain rare cases, men are known to have married women to protect the latter, and not for any physical union at all. But these cases are very rare indeed. You must read all that I have written on pure married life. What I read in the *Mahabharata* is daily growing upon me. Vyasa is described therein as having performed *niyoga*. He is not described as beautiful, but he was the reverse of it. His form is represented as terrible, he made no

amorous gestures, but he smeared his whole body with *ghee* before he performed the union. He performed the act, not for lust, but for procreation. The desire for a child is perfectly natural, and once the desire is satisfied, there should be no union.

—*Harijan*, April 24, 1937.

## 20

### EQUALITY

You are being united in marriage as friends and equals. If the husband is called *swami*, the wife is *swamini*—each master of the other, each helpmate of the other, each co-operating with the other in the performance of life's tasks and duties. To you, boys, I would say that if you are gifted with better intellects and richer emotions infect the girls with them. Be their true teachers and guides, help them and guide them, but never hinder them or misguide them. Be their true teachers and guides, and let there be complete harmony of thought and word and deed between you. May you have no secrets from each other, may you be one in soul.

—*Harijan*, April 24, 1937.

## 21

## A BOTTOMLESS PIT

I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability. Nor can I claim any special merit for such non-violence or continence as I have been able to reach with laborious research. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith. Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit.

—*Harijan*, October 30, 1936.

## 22

## UNCLEAN THOUGHT

Why argue that a man like me could not escape unclean thoughts, there is no hope for the rest? Why not rather argue that if a Gandhi, who was once given to lust, can to-day live as friend and brother to his wife and can look upon the fairest damsel as his sister or daughter, there is hope for the lowliest and the lost? If God was merciful to one who was so full of lust, certainly all the rest would have His mercy too.

—*Young India*, June 26, 1927.

## 23

## PRICELESS POSSESSION

Innocent youth is a priceless possession not to be squandered away for the sake of a momentary excitement, miscalled pleasure.

—*Harijan*, September 21, 1935.

## 24

## PURPOSE OF LIFE

The main purpose of life is to live rightly, think rightly, act rightly; the soul must languish when we give all our thought to the body.

—*Harijan*, February 27, 1936.

## 25

## PURITY

Purity of character and salvation depends on purity of heart.

—*Young India*, February 21, 1929.

## 26

## MORALITY

Morality which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of hearts.

—*Harijan*, June 8, 1940.

## 27

## RUINOUS SUPERSTITION

It is being said that restraint and abstinence are wrong, and free satisfaction of the sexual appetite and free love is the most natural thing. There was never a more ruinous superstition.

—*Harijan*, April 24, 1937.

## 28

## ABSTENTION

Both man and woman should know that abstinence from satisfaction of the sexual appetite results, not in disease, but in health and vigour, provided that mind co-operates with the body.

—*Young India*, September 27, 1928.

## 29

## THE BETTER HALF

I hold myself to be incapable of writing anything derogatory to womankind. My regard for the fair sex is too great to permit me to think ill of them. She is what she has been described to be in English, the better half of mankind.

—*Harijan*, February 4, 1939.



## 30

## WOMAN AS A TOOL

Man has regarded woman as his tool. She learned to be his tool, and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags a nother in his fall the descent is easy.

—*Harijan*, January 25, 1936.

## 31

## THE LATENT POWER

Would that woman will realize the power she has latent in her for good, if she has also for mischief. It is in her power to make the world more livable both for her and her partner, whether as father, son or husband, if she would cease to think of herself as weak and fit only to serve as a doll for man to play with. If society is not to be destroyed by insane wars on nations against nations and still more insane wars on its moral foundations, the woman will have to play her part not manfully, as some are trying to do, but womanfully. She won't better humanity by vying with man in his ability to destroy life mostly without purpose. Let it be her privilege to wean the erring man from his error which will envelop in his ruin woman also.

—*Harijan*, November 16, 1936.

## 32

## THE COMPANION OF MAN

Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him.

—*Harijan*, February 20, 1918.

## 33

## SELF-SACRIFICE

Woman, I hold, is the personification of self-sacrifice ; but unfortunately to-day she does not realize what a tremendous advantage she has over man.

—*India's Case for Swaraj*, p. 401.

## 34

## PERFECT EQUALITY

I am uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. In my opinion, she should labour under no legal disability not be suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality.

—*Young India*, October 17, 1929.

## 35

## THE NOBLEST CREATION

I will far rather see the race of man extinct than that we should become less than beasts by making the noblest of God's creation the object of our lust.

—*Young India*, July 21, 1921.

## 36

## THE WEAKER SEX

To call a woman a member of 'the weaker sex' is a libel. In what way is woman the weaker sex I do not know. If the implication is that she lacks the brute instinct of man or does not possess it in the same measure as man, the charge may be admitted. But the woman becomes, as she is, the nobler sex. If she is **weak** in striking, she is strong in suffering. I have described woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and *ahimsa*. She has to learn not to rely on man to protect her virtue or her honour. I do not know a single instance of a man having ever protected the virtue of a woman. He cannot even if he would. Rama certainly did not protect the 'virtue' of Sita, nor the five Pandavas of Draupadi. Both these noble women protected their own virtue by the sheer

force of their purity. No person loses honour or self-respect but by his consent. A woman no more loses her honour or virtue because a brute renders her senseless and ravishes her than a man loses his because a wicked woman administers to him a stupefying drug and makes him do what she likes.

—*Harijan*, November 14, 1936.

### 37

#### JEWELLERY

In this country of semi-starvation and insufficient nutrition of practically eighty per cent of the people, the wearing of jewellery is an offence to the eye

—*Harijan*, December 22, 1933.

### 38

#### PLAY YOUR PART

If you want to play your part in the world's affairs you must refuse to deck yourselves for pleasing him. If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything.

—*Young India*, October 20, 1927

## 39

## SUPREME MISTRESS

Woman is the supreme mistress in domestic matters.

—*Young India*, December 24, 1938.

## 40

## PURITY PERSONIFIED

Woman is nothing if she is not self-sacrifice and purity personified.

—*Young India*, November 19, 1925.

## 41

## LEGAL STATUS

Equally important is the question of the status of women both Hindu and Mohammedan. Are they or are they not to play their full part in the plan of regeneration alongside of their husbands? They must be enfranchised. They can no longer be treated as dolls or slaves without the social body remaining in a condition of social paralysis. And here again I would venture to suggest to the reformer that the way to woman's freedom is not through education but through the change of attitude on the part of men and corresponding action. Education is necessary but it must follow the freedom. We

dare not wait for literary education to restore our womanhood to its proper state. Even without literary education our women are as cultured as any on the face of the earth. The remedy largely lies in the hand of husband.

—*From a Speech*, July 17, 1917.

## 42

### SWARAJ

If you want to establish *Swaraj* in India, which for you and me can only mean *Rama Rajya*, you must become pure in mind and body like Sita for then alone you will become the mothers of heroes. And as a first step towards attaining bodily purity you must wear pure, homespun Khadi just as Sita did in days of old. And lastly you must emancipate yourselves and your daughters from the thralldom of the various social abuses and tyrannies that are prevalent in your midst at present. •

*Young India*, February 21, 1929.

## 43

### LITERATURE

I am told that our literature is full of even an exaggerated apotheosis of woman. Let me say that it is an altogether wrong apotheosis. Let me place one simple test before you. In

what light do you think of them when you proceed to write about them? I suggest that before you put your pens to paper, think of woman as your own mother, and I assure you the chastest literature will flow from your pens even like the beautiful rain from heaven which waters the thirsty earth below. Remember that a woman was your mother before a woman became your wife. Far from quenching their spiritual thirst some writers stimulate their passions, so much so that poor ignorant women waste their time wondering how they might answer to the description our fiction gives of them. Are detailed descriptions of their physical form an essential part of literature, I wonder! Do you find anything of the kind in the *Upanishads*, the *Quran* or the *Bible*? And yet do you know that the English language would be empty without the *Bible*? Three parts *Bible* and one part Shakespeare is the description of it. 'Arabic would be forgotten without the *Quran*. And think of without Tulsidas. Do you find in it anything like what you find in present-day literature about women?

—*Harijan*, November 21, 1936.

## REMEMBER !

Remember that I really came to enjoy my married life, after I ceased to look at Ba (Kasturba) sexually. I took the vow of abstinence when I was in the prime of youth and health, when I was young enough to enjoy married life in the accepted sense of the term. I saw in a flash that I was born, as we all are, for a sacred mission. I did not know this when I was married. But on coming to my senses, I felt that I must see that the marriage subserved the mission for which I was born. Then, indeed, did I realize true *dharma*. True happiness came into our lives only after the vow was taken. Ba, though she looks frail, has a fine constitution and toils from morning until night. She would never have done so had she continued to be the object of my lust.

And yet, I woke up late in the sense that I had lived the married life for some years. You are lucky enough to be aroused in good time. Circumstances, when I was married, were as unpropitious as they could be. For you, they are as propitious as they can be. There was one thing, though, that I possessed and that carried me through. It was the armour of truth. That



protected me and saved me. Truth has been the very foundation of my life. *Brahmacharya* and *Ahimsa* were born later out of Truth. Whatever, therefore, you do, be true to yourselves and to the world. Hide not your thoughts. If it is shameful to reveal them, it is more shameful to think them.

—*Mahatma Gandhi.*

